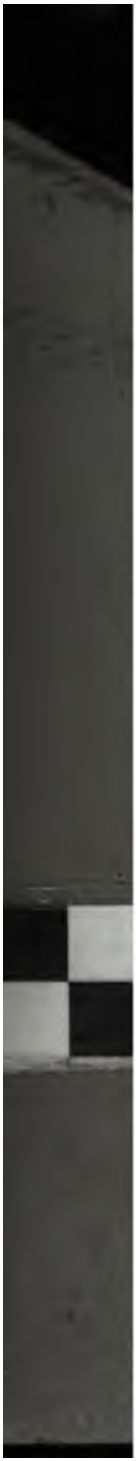

HOGAN, M.P.

VOL. II.

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A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

HENRY S. KING & CO., LONDON.
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HOGAN, M.P.

CHAPTER I.

"To thee, King John, my holy errand is.
I, Pandulph, of fair Milan Cardinal,
And from Pope Innocent the legate here,
Do, in his name, religiously demand
Why thou against the Church, our holy mother,
So wilfully dost spurn?"—

King John.

HOGAN drove up to the gates of St. Swithin's shortly after nine o'clock the morning following Lord Brayhead's dinner. Finding the side-door ajar, as it was the hour for the arrival of the day-pupils, he bade his carman wait, and slipping in amongst a crowd of children, who were assembled waiting for the ringing of the school-bell, speedily found himself at the green baize door of the Mother Superior's

parlour. He knocked; and on hearing his uncle's tones in reply, entered.

"God bless me, John! what has brought you here?" was the astonished salutation of his lordship, who was seated at his breakfast, and who almost jumped up, so surprised was he.

"Don't disturb yourself, my lord," said Hogan, pulling over a chair. "I took the liberty of coming here, as I could not see you to-night. Pray go on with your breakfast; I'll tell my story as you finish."

The Bishop chipped his egg—a new-laid one, the produce of the conventual poultry yard. His breakfast was charming. The bread was home-baked; the butter, in pretty little round pats, and the cream in the silver jug, came from a cool dairy situated in a corner of the nuns' own garden; the cloth was the whitest, the china the prettiest that could anywhere be seen; and the little silver teapot and sugar-pot, which shone bright enough to dazzle one's eyes, had been bequeathed to the sisterhood by an old lady who, having survived all her relations and friends, had died in their convent.

"Well, sir," began Hogan, "you will be

astonished at my news. The member for Peatstown is dying, and—ah—I have been recommended to stand for the seat."

"Peatstown! Good Lord! that's Jim Corkran's parish, that was with me at Maynooth. Whew!" And the Bishop almost whistled, so great was his astonishment.

"Mr. Wyldoates is in a hopeless state," continued his nephew; "the vacancy may be declared any minute, and a contest is not anticipated."

"A contest, at least if a Conservative opposed you, would be no hurt; for the Reform Club or the Liberal Association would guarantee your expenses, or part of them, to keep the seat to the Government, wouldn't they now?"

"Well, sir, you see Dissolution is only a year or so off, and I think the Tories are reserving their strength for a tussle then. You see, one man more or less is nothing while the Whigs have such a majority. And they have too firm a hold on the country not to get in again after the General Election. I have no fear at all of not being re-elected if I got in."

"What will it cost?" asked the Bishop

abruptly. "Father Corkran won't let you off short of a couple of hundred. God bless us! the time of the last election I remember he sent to that rich Manchester man (I forget his name) that was opposing Wyldoates, and told him the roof of the parish chapel was out of repair. The fellow sent him a cheque for eighty pounds. Corkran wasn't satisfied, but sent him back a letter to say he had a second chapel wanting a roof to it. He did; and got a fifty-pound note for it. And the cream of the joke was the Manchester man was left out in the cold after all,"—and his lordship laughed heartily.

"I might do it for eight hundred. And I really think I'll chance it, sir. You see this Home Rule platform is sure to rally the people."

"The people!" repeated the Bishop, folding his napkin and pulling away his chair from the breakfast table; "it will go very much according to whether their priests are for Home Rule or not. There's the Education question; if you want to stand with them, put that first. You will not have their support unless you stand firm on that point."

"Home Rule will bring me in the votes," said Hogan in a dogged tone. "I see nobody anxious for the Education question but the priests. How does it affect the Peatstown people, compared with Home Rule? Kilboggan is an extorting, oppressing absentee. All those fellows are looking to Home Rule to settle the Land question. They are indeed, sir."

"God help them!" was the sententious reply.

"Would the Cardinal recommend me to the clergy and the chief Catholics of the place? He has never pronounced yet in favour of Home Rule." Hogan, as he asked this question, leaned on his elbow, and resting his chin in the palm of his hand bent his grey eyes searchingly on the Bishop's face.

"I don't believe the Cardinal has ever given it his consideration one way or the other," said the Bishop, in a slow emphatic tone. "*I* don't approve of it; and my acquaintance, so far as it goes, with the opinions among the clergy, leads me to infer that it would not be acceptable at all to the Hierarchy. However, it is neither sedition nor treason; neither, though it has begun," he added pointedly,

"among the Protestants, and independently of the Church, is it irreligious. Some few priests go in for it heart and soul; more say they don't understand it; and, in fact, it is not decided yet what course is to be pursued with regard to it; nor, what's more, will it be decided yet awhile. You had better consult your own judgment in that matter. But I warn you, show a proper regard for the Education question. The clergy are set upon that."

"They'll never get it. The people are against it altogether. Look here, sir: when you can reverse the whole state of society, when you can put the Protestants at the bottom and the Catholics on the top; make the Protestants the low poor people, the struggling traders, and the mushroom rich, and have the Catholics the aristocrats, the refined, high-born, exclusive sect that the others are now, *then* you may have a Catholic university, and *then* the Protestants will be disobeying their rulers and their consciences, and sending their sons to it that they may be improved and refined by coming in contact with us. If you had a chartered university this minute, the wealthy Catholics would send their sons to

Trinity all the same; and small blame to them."

"Tut, tut; you talk nonsense. Why should not we have a Catholic University, as well as the Belgians and the French, and——?"

"Have it the nest of free-thinkers and atheists that theirs are." Hogan took out his watch. "No, no; you misunderstand the whole question, my lord—entirely misunderstand it. A quarter past ten, sir. Well, you don't say against my project?"

"I'll say nothing at all. I'd like to make inquiries first. There's no great hurry, is there?"

"Well, no, not exactly," returned Hogan, who saw clearly that his lordship meant to give his consent; "I'll call up to you some evening soon."

Then he remounted his car, and hastened to an appointment at an attorney's office before Court.

* * * * *

"Diana, is that young man to be here this afternoon?"

These words were spoken by Mrs. Bursford to her daughter, perhaps at the same moment

that the young man referred to was engaged in the conversation with his uncle detailed above.

"Possibly, mamma," returned Miss Bursford, who was stooping over a large music wagon beside her piano. Miss Bursford was certainly not a morning beauty, like our friend Nellie Davoren: the clear bright sunlight showed many a flaw that the wax-lights of the night before had not discovered; a beauty when unadorned she certainly was not; and her woollen morning dress of plain design betrayed the deficiencies of figure that a *modiste's* cunning hand had veiled or supplied in her toilette of the night before.

"We must defer our visits until to-morrow, then. I must say that I do not care for Romanist acquaintances. He looks to be well-bred and gentlemanly, I allow; but you never know what the family may turn out to be. There was Elinor Hely insisting on marrying that odious O'Ryan, the surgeon of the —th; and what a mother and sisters-in-law she found herself set up with!"

"I think you know very well, mamma," returned the young lady, with more than a

shade of sharpness in her voice, "that Mr. O'Rooney Hogan has no relatives." And she continued sorting the music into parcels, laying the separate pieces neatly on top of each other, and picking out two or three which she placed on the piano for practising.

Mrs. Bursford sighed as she rose from her writing-table; she was too well conversant with her daughter's disposition to oppose her in the matter, and too well aware, also, of the hopelessness of this new venture to think it worth risking either opposition or encouragement. She had given up all hopes that her daughter could be married by any effort of hers. She did her best; for she certainly devoted nearly two-thirds of her income exclusively to the furtherance of that great object. She carried her everywhere; she got introductions by the score; she had plenty of relatives, connections, and acquaintances. Still, Miss Bursford did not take: she was ladylike, well educated of course, and possessed a thorough finished society manner,—a bearing that procured her a due amount of deference and attention everywhere she went. Still, the general feeling in a

room, when she had taken her departure, was one of relief; her cold blue eyes and distant manner with her own sex were rather repelling. She was always irreproachably dressed, and had a way, whether she meant it or not, of making any woman who was not up to the mark in point of toilette conscious of her deficiency. With men she made the mistake of adopting a totally different manner. She was *empressée*, flattering, and deferential; listening to the silliest chaff with engrossed attentiveness, as if to the utterances of a cabinet minister. But she wanted softness; her *câlineries* were too artificial and too well-worn; the iron hand showed itself too unmistakably beneath the velvet glove. The girl was, in truth, sick of her *rôle;* fourteen years was a long apprenticeship, and she wearied for the day when she might lay aside, literally as well as metaphorically, the war paint and feathers; when she might be natural and affected, and, above all, independent of the mother bird, whose control, prolonged far beyond the natural limits, was now become distasteful and wearisome to her.

Sons escape the maternal rule, to them always light, as soon as they become men; sometimes as soon as they go to school. In many cases, from the very cradle up they are obeyed rather than commanded. But it is not so with the women-children; they leave school to enter upon a still harder regimen, and one that never relaxes until the door of wifehood opens for them—if they are so fortunate as to escape by that risky aperture; if not, as in Diana Bursford's case, they must only bow their necks to the yoke, and hope that time may soften its asperities and make it wear easier. It does sometimes; but, as often as not, a collar too tight-fitting and galling creates a painful raw instead of a callosity.

Nor had Diana's training and mode of life been the best suited to fit her to bear the inequalities of her lot with that patience and philosophy which, under some conditions, rise to the level of dignity. One-third of every day of her life, perhaps, was devoted to the cares of her toilet, and to practising her music. This last she disliked naturally, and had not a particle of native aptitude for it.

But music, vocal or other, is an indispensable part of the equipment of a young lady, and so Diana had been forced to learn; and, by dint of much expenditure of time and money, succeeded in singing and playing in a fashionable and mechanical manner. It was no pleasure to hear either performance; but then, it was patent to everybody that she had been well taught—*i.e.*, by expensive teachers. When an audience cannot pronounce any other compliment, they are seldom chary of their acknowledgments on this particular point.

Miss Bursford and her mother had paid their tribute to society; and society, in return, graciously accorded its sense, not of gratitude—to express it more accurately, let us say, tendered a receipt for value received. There were times, it is true, when Diana was fairly tired out; and, despairing, threatened to take refuge at last in one of the new sisterhoods: and then Mrs. Bursford would rage and storm. She had, as we have said, abandoned all hopes that a husband could be caught in the ordinary way for her daughter; but she still cherished a belief in fate, or providence, or chance. She designated the mysterious hidden

potentiality by all three names, varying them according to the frame of mind she happened to be in. On Sundays, or when she chanced to be in a religious mood, it was generally providence; when she coupled Diana in an especial manner with the contingency referred to, it was fate she invoked; while the good luck of other women's daughters was always ascribed to mere chance. When things seemed most hopeless, she would cast over in her mind all the odd pieces of luck that had fallen to the lot of women much older than Diana: Miss Dillon, without a penny, who was forty, and who had been proposed for* by her parish priest—in trust—for a grazier, of enormous wealth, who had seen her walking along the road; and Miss Hare, without a penny also, and more than forty, who married a general worth five thousand a year; then again, only the other day, old Miss Stoney getting a judge (Miss Stoney's age was notorious). So she would rake up precedents, her hopes

* The expression "proposed for," like many idioms apparently unaccountable, exactly defines the action. A proposal of marriage is seldom made *to* the lady, but *to* her guardian *for* her.

rising in corresponding ratio with the ages and drawbacks of the personages she adduced, till Diana would fling out of the room almost in hysterics.

Miss Bursford seated herself at the piano, and began to pick out slowly and deliberately, bar by bar and line by line, the last fashion in waltzes. When ten or twelve years younger, she might have taken a novel and abandoned herself to the luxury of castle-building, leaving the ways and means to develop themselves; but it was not so now. Romance had long ago taken wing; and feeling, not to say love, she had never known since she was twenty-five; for Captain Vesey had certainly carried poor Miss Bursford's heart to Abyssinia, and left it there, for he married an Indian widow on his way home. She took everything in the most practical, business-like way; and having selected a fort to be stormed, drew her lines around it, dug trenches, and turned every available gun on the weakest points with the skill and dexterity to be learnt only in the heavy campaigning business to which her existence had been devoted.

When her allotted time of practising was

over, she went to her room to make her toilette for the afternoon, and seated herself before her mirror. The Venetian blind pulled carefully down, and her long fair hair well in process of the complicated brushings, spongings, and rubbings necessary to coax it into brightness and silkiness, she began to consider her position and calculate her chances. Brushing her hair seemed to set her thinking powers in action; it was like a considering cap, and every vexed question was kept methodically for this hour of the day. She was not one of those people who, to use an Americanism, "borrow trouble" by forecasting complications or situations ere they actually exist. She took things as they came, in a matter-of-fact, practical way; and, turning the full force of a somewhat narrow intellect directly upon them, just as she did with a difficult passage in a piece of music, exerted herself to her utmost until she succeeded, or found she had miscalculated her forces.

She had estimated Hogan pretty accurately; and Saltasche had given her mother a rough outline of his career, past and present, which had led that veteran to con-

clude, although she disliked him on personal as well as on religious and social grounds, that this barrister was worth looking up. He had nothing at present; but an embryo M.P. is always a judge or colonial dignitary in perspective; and as to his religion, in Ireland it was a drawback certainly, but in London it might be rather an advantage. People of undoubted rank and position in England seemed to think most highly of her uncle Monsignor Bursford; while in Dublin he could only be spoken of with bated breath, as of some disgraceful appendage, and always as a *convert;* her mother felt it quite a duty to have it known that her brother-in-law had not been *born* a Roman Catholic.

Diana reflected also that Mr. Hogan was a *débutant* in society—that he knew nobody. Lord Brayhead had taken him up, she felt certain, for some purpose of his own in connection, doubtless, with some of his selfish, absurd schemes. The private opinions of his female relatives regarding that great gentleman were not too flattering. As for Mr. Saltasche, he was utterly unaccountable; and being a man of reputed wealth, and moving in the

best society, equally irresponsible. She had the greatest confidence in his discernment, however, and felt fully disposed to act on his information and suggestions. As to introducing his friend to her own set generally, she had her doubts as to the prudence of that. There were too many girls younger and more attractive than herself, who would do their best to secure even such an uncertain prize as this promising young barrister. The more Diana thought it over, the more firmly convinced she was of the necessity of keeping him out of the way of people as much as possible. "*Experientia docet*"; and Diana's wisdom was of that solid kind that has been bought and paid for.

When fully dressed, she pulled up the blind and looked out, and up and down the street. Not that she expected to see anybody or anything; but it was a habit of hers. Then she turned a large cheval glass round to the light, and surveyed herself critically from head to foot. Her dress was a mixture of dark violet cashmere, and pale blue silk; the lighter shade gave a golden eflection to her hair, and a soft ruffle of cam-

bric and lace concealed the thinness, while adding to the whiteness of her neck; velvet wristbands performed the same friendly office for her hands and wrists. She had scarcely finished her inspection when a loud knock resounded through the house.

A sneer curled Miss Bursford's lips as the thought flashed through her mind that Hogan was so hurried to confirm his introduction to people of respectability. And she went down to the drawing-room with a leisurely step, intending to maintain her advantage by a chillingly condescending tone.

To her surprise, instead of Mr. O'Rooney Hogan, there was Mr. Saltasche's rotund figure reclining in the easiest chair by the fire. Saltasche had been a school friend of Diana's eldest brother, and was on intimate terms with the family. He managed Mrs. Bursford's business for her in general, and had charge of the investments of her money.

"Well, Miss Di., good morning; is your mother in? I can't stay a moment. By-the-bye," and he got up and leaned against the mantlepiece, "Miss Diana, Mr. Hogan—er—" (Diana glanced up at him with a look full

of interest)—"is pretty safe to get in for Peatstown. Try and—ah—engage him for the concert if you can. He will call this afternoon after court; about five, maybe. Tell him I am away to London to-night; will be back on Saturday morning. Can I do anything for you there?"

"No," she replied; "it would be too much to trouble you with commissions. You are too kind." She was rapidly thinking over his words, and trying to account for his evident desire to interest her in his *protégé*.

Mrs. Bursford came in now.

"Mr. Saltasche, I am very glad to see you. How do you do? Pray sit down."

"I am going over to the 'little village' to-night. I just leave you these in your own hands before starting. Just sign me this receipt for the Leadmines stock—and you, Miss Diana"; and he handed her a large roll of papers.

Mrs. Bursford took the envelope to her secretary, and, after examining its contents, locked it up. She and Miss Diana signed the prepared receipt, which he then transferred to his pocket-book.

"How very well their 'Excies' looked

last night!" Mr. Saltasche observed for about the twelfth time that day.

"Very well indeed," responded the ladies simultaneously.

"He has bought a couple of Lord Newmarket's hunters at Newby's. Splendid animals! Gave three hundred guineas for one of them. Sent them down to the Curragh this morning," continued Mr. Saltasche, with the same tone of proprietorial interest. "I am told, though, that one of them has rather—ah—an inclination to sandcrack," he added, as gloomily as if the price of the animal had come out of his own pocket.

"Dear me!" said the ladies; who did not in the least know what the sandcrack was, but who felt interested and sympathetic immediately in anything ever so remotely concerning their dear Excellencies.

"You will go on Saturday to the theatre?" continued he; "it's a Command night. I shall be there if I can get back in time. Must go now. We'll meet again. Don't forget my message, Miss Diana. Good-bye. Can't I do anything for you in London? No, no: I have had lunch. Quite sure. Adieu! adieu!"

And so Mr. Saltasche took himself off, bowing and smiling to the last moment; and leaving the two ladies quite refreshed and roused up by his visit. It was just as if a wholesome out-of-door breeze had suddenly invaded a close-heated room.

Diana felt invigorated and braced up for action: as she sat down to lunch she said to her mother, "Do you think, mamma, we could get those visits paid in the Square, and be back here by half-past four?"

Mrs. Bursford paused for a second. She knew perfectly well, from her daughter's tone and the mention of the particular hour, that Saltasche had given her some hint before she came down to the drawing-room. What was the good of demurring? So she shrugged her shoulders in a helpless sort of way, and replied resignedly, "We may as well, I suppose."

CHAPTER II.

"Guided by you, our earnest aims presume
To renovate the Drama * * * *
The scenes of Shakespeare and our bards of old,
With due observance splendidly unfold.
Yet raise and foster with parental hand
The living talent of our native land."—

Rejected Addresses.

"All you sage Counsellors hence!
And to the English Court assemble now,
From every region, apes of idleness."

King Henry IV.

Dicky Davoren was passing through the entrance gate on his way to the ten o'clock train one Friday morning, when the postman unceremoniously stuffed a couple of letters into his hands, and, glad to be saved the trouble of going up to the hall-door, made off as fast as possible. Dicky duly qualified

this impertinent proceeding; and then, casting his eye over the superscriptions, rushed back to the room where his sister was sitting, and tossing the letters into her lap, cried impatiently,—

"Open the O'Hegarty's first, Nell, and be quick. I've only five minutes."

Nellie broke the huge violet seal, and read as follows:—

"My dear Nellie,

"I should perhaps have written earlier to let you know that I want Dicky to secure front places for us at the 'Royal' for to-morrow night. Three: please remember. Come early, and dress here. It is a Command night. Tell Dicky, with my love, that I shall require him to see us home, as Peter pleads rheumatism to escape the 'extortion' of attending us. I hope your mother is better. My love to all of you. In haste,

"Your affectionate cousin,

"D. H."

"Well now!" exclaimed he; "and so I'm to be made do Peter's work! My word, it's

a trifle too cool of Miss Dorothy. That dirty, good-for-nothing creature kept to do nothing."

"Well, well," said his sister soothingly, "perhaps Peter will relent, and——"

"Yah! old rascal; relent, indeed! Give him a piece of my mind, I will. Dorothy Hegarty's getting childish. I'm to go take these seats too."

"There's nothing out of the way in that, is there? Here is the money for you. Go now, Dicky, or you will lose your train."

The young gentleman snatched the coin, and flew out of the house, running fast in order to make up for time lost. Not so fast, however, that he could not bestow a friendly wink on the nursemaid to whom he had forbidden his sister to speak, and whom he encountered in the avenue with her young charges.

He arrived at the station just as the train drew up; and in obedience to a signal made him from the window of a smoking carriage, clambered in beside his friend Orpen, who happened to be going up to town by the same train.

"Look here, Davoren," said this young gentleman; and putting his hand in the pocket of his Ulster coat, he produced a newspaper. Folding down a sheet, he pointed out to Dicky's inquisitive eyes an advertisement from a firm of bookmakers, setting forth, adorned with the usual notes of admiration and testimonials from grateful clients, the golden harvest to be reaped from their infallible system.

"A bam., is it not?" asked Dicky, incredulously.

Mr. Orpen winked his left eye, and having folded up the newspaper, put it back in his pocket without saying a word. Then he leaned back, and proceeded to enjoy the flavour of a dirty little briar-wood pipe, which he had laid aside for an instant, with the most perfect composure and elegant indifference.

Dicky Davoren was not blessed with the virtue of long-suffering; and after a moment's stoical acquiescence in the superior attitude of his friend, gave him an impatient push.

"You're not such an ass? Come now, Orpen."

Still no answer. So Dicky, burning with

eagerness, was forced to assume a look of indifference in sheer self-defence. Then Mr. Orpen condescended to enlighten him; and taking the questions in order of precedence, answered the first oracularly,—" 'Tis, and it isn't," and then winked again.

Mr. Davoren, who by this time had got a small meerschaum lighted, and with alarming contortion of feature was endeavouring to hold it in his mouth and smoke it simultaneously, without the aid of a supporting hand, allowed his friend's utterance to pass unnoticed.

" And as for being an ass," continued he of the briar-root, " all right: I am," and he nodded with an air of cheerful acquiescence.

Dicky felt absolutely humbled and abashed; conscious that irony of this magnitude was a weapon entirely beyond his powers, he gave in at once. Taking the meerschaum, whose uncoloured bowl betrayed its newness in a very lowering way, he laid it tenderly on the cushion beside him, and having expectorated out of window, advanced his face close to the impassive briar-root, and in an emphatic tone asked,—

"Orpen, how much are you on?"

Mr. Orpen deliberately reversed his pipe on the edge of the open window, and having knocked the last vestige of tobacco-ash out, put it in his pocket and answered sententiously,—

"Every brown I can raise."

Dicky's countenance glowed, and his blue eyes opened to their very widest extent. Then he dug his hands into his pockets and began a whistle.

"I know a chap," resumed Mr. Orpen, "that won a hundred and fifty on a mere little garrison steeplechase."

"Shillings?" interrupted Dicky, so greedy that he could not wait to hear all his friend had to say.

His companion glanced at him in a withering manner, and enunciated the single word "Sovereigns."

The train drew up at the City Terminus now, and the two youths descended, and taking each other's arms, plunged through a number of dirty byways across town to the college.

They dashed into the lecture-room almost breathlessly, and spent the time, as far as

Dicky was concerned, in happy unconsciousness of the reverend lecturer's every utterance. Dicky was deeply meditating the distinctions and differences between backing a horse and taking the odds, and calculating the amounts of imaginary investments and the intricacies of making a "safe book."

The moment they were free, away they rushed to the rooms of a gentleman commoner named Gagan. Him they found at breakfast, with a chum named Mahoney Quain, a splendid-looking young animal, over six feet in height, and renowned as one of the best athletes and wildest lads in Trinity.

"What's the row?" growled the host, turning a pair of very bloodshot eyes on the incomers. Mr. Gagan had been making a night of it; and the soda water with which his skip had liberally plied him had not quite rehabilitated him yet.

"Morrow, Mahoney," said Dicky. "Got out your watch?"

This allusion was called forth by the unusual sight of a gold chain in the button-hole of the gentleman addressed.

"Yes," returned Mr. Mahoney with a grin;

"the money's gone back to the bank: here's the receipt!" and he dangled his watch in his fingers as he spoke.

"The Post Office Savings Bank is a humbug compared to a real good ticker. Mine's not half the value of yours, Mahoney. It was left me by an old godmother, for being a good boy and attending Sunday-school regularly." Orpen intoned this part of his speech with a sort of nasal drone that made the rest laugh. "It doesn't keep time; but the governor can't take a hint, and declines to exchange it."

"That's not what we came for," interrupted Dicky. "Orpen, show that advertisement. Look, Gagan."

Mr. Quain stooped his great back over the table, and, in company with his friends, perused the enticing bill of fare set forth in the columns of one of the most largely circulated and influential papers in Dublin.

"Ten pounds realize four hundred. Augh!" grunted he derisively, "the lowest thing they notice is five pounds."

"Five hundred it might as well be!" cried Dicky scornfully.

"What do you think of a joint stock con-

cern?" asked Mr. Orpen. "Quain, you're in cash; Davoren, couldn't you manage twenty-five shillings—hey? Make your game, genelmen; ball's a-rolling. *Rooge ah nore*, genelmen! genelmen!!" And Mr. Orpen, whose forte lay in mimicry, gave a good imitation of a well-known roulette man of the day.

"I shan't," said Mr. Gagan; "I'm cleaned out. You did it, Billy Orpen; so put down for me, else I won't."

"Have you your Ulster coat?" suggested Mr. Quain, who was credited with a perfect genius for raising money.

"No, I haven't my Ulster coat," returned Mr. Gagan savagely; "it's pawned two days ago."

A silence fell on the quartette. It seemed as if their scheme was to fall through; but Orpen, inspired by a sudden thought, cried,—

"Day after to-morrow we give in our fees, don't we? Suppose you—ah—just postpone paying yours for a week, Gagan. I have done that: it works beautifully. They never mind a few days' delay; and something's always sure to turn up in a week."

Mr. Gagan looked a little frightened; he

had not tried this expedient yet; embezzling the fees was looked upon in college as a rather go-ahead practice.

"And what if your new financial dodge turns out to be a bilk?" asked Mahoney Quain, stretching himself lazily against the opposite wall of the little grimy room.

Orpen shook his head. "Perfectly safe, my boy; take thirty, forty, whatever is given against their selection or your own, I bet you we'll win."

"Have you won anything by it?" asked the host, slowly raising his head from the back of his chair.

"No, I have not tried it yet; but a cousin of mine has—a very decent fellow, Jack Warden, —I dined at his house yesterday, and he tells me he netted a cool hundred and fifty on a ten-pun' note; he recommended me to try this firm in preference to his. He—let me see—I think he took seventeen or eighteen to one against Molasses; then their commission and charges reduced it. He is making money at it, I assure you."

"When is the event, and what is it?" asked Mr. Gagan a little impatiently.

"Churton races; and they settle the Monday after. The money must be forwarded by Tuesday at latest."

"I'll close on the fees," declared Gagan energetically, sitting up straight in the chair.

"I'm on too," said Mahoney Quain. "And I," declared Dicky Davoren, last of all, but not a whit less determinedly.

"Is it money down now?" asked the gigantic Mahoney, proceeding to finger over a handful of silver.

"Monday afternoon will do. Meet me at the football gathering. Now don't forget," adjured Orpen; on whom seemed to fall of its own accord, and by tacit consent, the office of secretary and treasurer.

Mr. Gagan lay down on his bed in an adjoining room; Dicky threw his books into a corner, and selected the most enticing of a collection of novels; Mahoney Quain, who was not addicted to literature in any shape, lighted a clay pipe; and Orpen disappeared with his newspaper, doubtless in quest of another Joint Stock company of subscribers. Before Dicky had finished the second page of

his romance he remembered his commission, and reflecting that it would never do to forfeit the good graces of either Miss Dorothy or his sister at this particular juncture—for he was depending chiefly on their support to enable him to raise the twenty-five shillings, that nest-egg which was to be the nucleus of an inexhaustible Eldorado—dashed off at once to secure the places.

In the box office of the Theatre Royal he brushed against no less a person than Hogan, who, at the instance of Mr. Saltasche, was also taking places in the front row.

"Who are you squiring?" asked Hogan, carelessly, on hearing him demand three tickets.

"My sister, and—a—my cousin. Front row, and as near the centre as you have them," said Dicky to the booking-clerk.

"This gentleman has got the centre seat; there are a couple on either side of his, if you could just settle between you," returned the official.

"Of course," said Hogan; "here, twenty-one, two, three, for you; give me this one." The exchange was made to the satisfaction

of both, and they turned and walked out together.

"How is your sister?" asked Hogan. "I have not seen you now for a good while: come in and have an oyster." They were just at Burton Bindon's door: Dicky assenting, both entered, and were speedily engaged with a dish of bivalves, washed down with tankards of stout.

"Master Davoren, why have you never come to see me?"

"I will, indeed," returned Dicky. "I wrote down your address."

"I shall be giving a supper some night next week, or so. Where is this you are? 'Church——' what was it?"

"Church House, Green Lanes," replied the boy promptly.

"Oh, you're beside Mr. Saltasche there. Do you know him?"

"I do; he lives close to us. Awful swell place; no end of glass, and all that sort of thing. Nice, jolly old chap, too."

"Old chap!" thought Hogan; "a man I take to be only twelve or thirteen years older than myself: how these young ones run on!" and he looked at the stripling beside him.

"Seventeen, I suppose," he continued, noting the clear, smooth, almost girlish face, and weedy, though promising build of the lad.

"How old are you, Mr. Davoren? Twenty?"

Immensely flattered, Dicky looked up with a pleased expression.

"Not quite," he replied. "Not eighteen yet.

"Dear me! indeed!" Hogan threw all the wonder possible into his tone. "My dear fellow, excuse me, I must follow that gentleman going out there." Hogan ran over to the bar, paid for both, and disappeared after an attorney of his acquaintance.

Dicky sauntered out leisurely, and returned to college, ostensibly to an afternoon lecture, but in reality to lay his plans with a view to possessing himself of the needful sum of money. If he were to borrow from Orpen, that youth, who somehow always managed to have cash in his pockets, would insist on being paid out of the profits—Mr. Dicky, of course, with his usual confidence, looked upon the venture as already realized—and Orpen was such a Jew he would extort goodness knows how much per-centage; then, too, the money would

be in his hands, and he could in fact lay an embargo upon it. Somehow, the post of chancellor of the exchequer always devolved upon Orpen: some eclectic affinity between him and money, thought Dicky, shaking his blond head. He must look for it elsewhere.

The result of all his meditations seemed to be indicated by his dropping into his cousin's house in Fitzgerald Place at seven o'clock punctually, dressed with the most scrupulous care, and with a flower in his button-hole for which he had paid sixpence to the florist who lived in Green Lanes, and which, had he bought it in the Nassau Street shops, would have cost perhaps three times the money.

"The darling villain!" screamed Miss O'Hegarty, on finding him in the drawing-room when she came down; "he's actually punctual to the minute! And how nice he looks! Really, Nellie," she cried, to that young lady as she followed her in, "we may be quite proud of him to-night."

Nellie was not a little puzzled. She had expected, from the young gentleman's conduct of the morning, that he would have presented himself with a sulky countenance at the very

last minute, and that he would have forgotten the tickets, or have gone to procure them so late in the day that they would have been obliged to put up with a back row. Not so: he produced an envelope, and handed it to his cousin, remarking,—

"Centre front, ma'am. Twenty-one, two, and three; and I've ordered a cab."

"The dear, thoughtful child!" cried Miss Dorothy in a perfect ecstasy; "and so poor Peter needn't go out with his rheumatism."

Nellie was stroking her hair before a pier-glass, and detected the trace of a grimace on the collegian's face; but she wisely abstained from making a remark, feeling grateful to whatever accident had caused his unwonted good-humour.

"Where did you get that lovely bud, Dicky?" she asked.

"Bought it—ah—just now," returned he, glancing modestly down at the camellia, as if overcome with a sense of his own graciousness and amiability.

"We need not be there too soon, as we've taken our places. Sit down a bit, Dicky, till I get you a glass of wine; and tell us what you've

been doing." And Miss O'Hegarty seated herself in her arm-chair and rang the bell.

Peter presented himself with a countenance of superhuman crossness at the door.

"Peter! a glass of wine for Master Richard; and you needn't go for a cab. Master Richard has saved you the trouble; he has been so thoughtful as to order one as he came along."

Peter cast a glance of utter scorn and incredulity, on hearing this assertion, at both his mistress and Master Richard. This last-named repaid it with a broad grin of triumph and defiance.

"I hav'n't been doing anything, ma'am. College as usual; and went and looked at the football match."

"Were you not playing, dear?"

"No, ma'am. Hem,—my subscription is out (five shillings), and it's got to be renewed." Nellie, hearing this, turned and looked at him in utter bewilderment, clearly remembering him to have got the very five shillings from his father only one week before.

"Oh, you must have it. I'll see that you have it, Dick; now take your glass of wine: you must have hurried over your dinner."

Mr. Dick mentally placed the five shillings to the credit of an account he was opening with his bank, which was situated in the top small drawer of his bureau at home, and drank his glass of sherry with infinite relish. Then feeling impatient to make his final move in the game, he declared it time to be off, and marshalled his charges carefully into the cab.

When they arrived at the theatre, and were about to pass down the tiers of seats to the front, Dicky seized Nellie by the arm, and held her back, saying, "Let Cousin Dorothy go first."

Miss O'Hegarty passed in accordingly, and took number twenty-one, as he intended; then he placed himself between the two ladies, leaving Nellie in the seat marked twenty-three. "Now," thought the young Machiavelli, "if Hogan has the gumption to sit next her, she'll be in good humour too."

They were rather early; but Miss O'Hegarty liked to be in before everybody else; and in the theatre, or in church, she almost considered it a part of the performance to see the people come in. Nellie leaned back in her stall and

looked round; the gas was not fully turned on, and the half-light had a pretty effect. The orchestra were tuning their instruments.

"That's a part of the performance I never could understand their having to go through in public," said Miss O'Hegarty with a grimace. "Just hear those fiddles scrooping: it ought to be done somewhere at the back. Ugh!"

Then a crowd poured in, and she began to recognize her acquaintances on all sides. Right opposite to them sat the Raffertys, dressed in all the hues of the rainbow, and the Brangans, and a tribe of their friends. Presently people began to crowd in behind. Miss O'Hegarty looked round, and found Mrs. O'Hara and her daughters attended by a couple of officers. She turned Dicky out of his front seat, and made room for Mrs. O'Hara. The young ladies did not seem inclined to be divided from their squires. The gas was now turned on full, and the orchestra having finished the objectionable preliminaries, commenced a lively waltz. Gaudily dressed people streamed in; red cloaks, white cloaks, blue cloaks, great bouquets of hot-house flowers, and gold and silver sprinkled fans, flirting and fluttering on

all sides. The talking and rustling of silks rose above the music. All of a sudden a sort of commotion; then a lull. The waltz stopped suddenly, a bar of "God save the Queen" was played; their Excellencies were come, and without more ado the curtain drew up. Her Excellency looked pale and cold, and the red noses of her two old ladies-in-waiting beamed conspicuously over their ermine tippets. Mr. Wyldoates, and the other A.D.C.'s-in-waiting, settled themselves resignedly in a corner from which nothing could be heard or seen. The Malowneys were in their box too: Mrs. Malowney conspicuous by her absence; a chaperone, with a stack of roses on her head and huge knots of red ribbons, accompanied the young ladies in her stead. The Lord Mayor, of course, was present; his sons were in the pit, near the door, so as to slip out to the bar as often as necessary; and a rising young architect, and a young doctor, who showed themselves capable of appreciating the money and connection which Mr. Hogan had despised, made themselves agreeable to the ladies of the family.

One of the new modern society plays was

being performed by a London company, in the usual style. The noblemen of the piece certainly did not look "to the manner born," but were very well dressed. The actresses were tolerable; a lady who had a minor part played it pretty badly, but her splendid diamond earrings and red-heeled boots seemed to compensate for her deficiencies. The first part was played by a clever actress, who might have passed for a lady in ordinary society. She was the only one of the female characters who seemed conversant with the most ordinary rules of etiquette. An "h" was dropped here and there by the diamond-earringed lady; but the youngest nobleman of the piece kindly adjusted the balance by inserting an extra one at intervals.

The first act was over, when, hearing a stir behind them, Nellie, whose attention was by no means absorbed by the piece, turned her head and met the glance of Hogan, who, followed by Saltasche, was moving quietly down to his seat. He smiled and bowed, and passed on to the farther of the two seats. Saltasche followed, and took that next her, giving, as he did so, an approving glance in

her direction. Bland and smiling as ever, with a dark red camellia in his button-hole, he settled himself back in his chair to look round him; becoming aware of the presence of the physician-extraordinary beside Hogan, he touched him lightly.

"Change with me, my dear fellow; I want to speak to your neighbour."

It was done in a moment, and Hogan was Miss Davoren's next-door neighbour. She looked away across to the stage, trying hard to look unconcerned; but a bright lovely flush came up unbidden, and her eyes for an instant sparkled brighter.

Hogan caught sight of Nellie's neighbour, Mrs. O'Hara, and remembered having seen her at Lord Brayhead's dinner. He could not imagine whom Nellie was with. Presently Miss O'Hegarty handed an opera-glass to Nellie, desiring her to look at some person in the distance; and Mrs. O'Hara made some slight remark to her about the scene just going on. It was settled, then, who her companions were; and he was more puzzled than ever. She seemed to him still more exquisitely lovely to-night; her white cashmere cloak was open, showing

her full white throat; a cluster of lilies of the valley, looking the very embodiment of innocence and cold white purity, nestled in the abundant coils of her brown hair; the graceful, but as yet scarcely formed contour of her shoulders and bust, showed clearly under the thin drapery, indicating a form that would mature into still more perfect womanly beauty. Some way behind sat Miss Bursford, with the pretty, but made-up, little Mrs. De Lancier; and across, beside and half hidden by a pillar, wearing a *burnous* of deep crimson, above which her face looked like a *relievo* of snowy Carrara marble, leaning her head listlessly on her hand, was Captain Poignarde's wife. Saltasche caught sight, as he was sweeping the circle round with his lorgnette, first of Poignarde's vapid countenance, grinning approval of the actress of the diamonds: and, impelled by curiosity, looked to the right and left of him, to see if his *piquante* helpmate might chance to be there. She was looking, as it happened, straight in his direction, and he caught the very glance of her splendid liquid brown eyes right in his. The pure oval of her face was well

relieved against the braids of brown hair hanging low on her neck. White and scarlet camellia buds were set, in defiance of the mode of the day, right behind her left ear—just where the Spanish beauties put them; the white over the scarlet, so that the one set off the ivory-white skin it caressed and the other glowed in the setting of her luxuriant hair. Not a jewel did she wear, save a gold and diamond star, fixed in a black velvet ribbon on her neck; and her wrists, slender, round, and supple, bore not a single bracelet. Saltasche's artistic eye revelled in the picture she made; but not venturing to seem bold, he relinquished the glass to Hogan, and turned his eyes again on the stage. After awhile, at an emotional scene of the piece, seeing that Mrs. Poignarde, like every one else, was rapt in attention to the performance, he took the glass, and hurriedly adjusting it, fixed it full on her. Just the graceful pose of head he had noted that day down on the Quay; the square low brow, set in wavy brown ripples of hair; the white lithe neck, on which her head drooped and turned as gracefully and languidly as one of Nellie's lilies; the short curved upper lip and sweet

half-opened mouth, showing little uneven pearls of teeth.

"What countrywoman can it be?" wondered he. "The mouth and chin are too perfect and too pronounced for her to be Irish. The accent, too, I remember, was a little foreign. Could she be American? I must find her out."

The pathetic, or rather, hysterical, love scene, was over now, and the drop-scene fell. With the exquisite artistic taste of modern audiences, it had to be raised again, to allow the spectators to feast their eyes on Lady ——'s dishevelled fainting fit.

Hogan leaned upon his elbow, and said to Nellie, "Are you not hard-hearted? I have been watching you for a symptom of a tear, Miss Davoren. Such insensibility is quite distressing."

"Have you been greatly moved yourself?"

"Er—that is not expected, you know; you don't expect soft-heartedness from the sterner sex."

"I have noticed," said she, "that at sermons men cry more than women."

"Well, indeed," returned he, "if you could

read the hearts of all present now, you would find the men more moved by that pathetic scene than you ladies seem to be."

"You don't need to take the trouble of looking so far as their hearts. Take them on the evidence of their eyes, just." And Miss Davoren smiled a little maliciously.

"Miss Davoren," said he with mock gravity, "do you insinuate that their emotion arises from soft-headedness rather than ——?"

"I am sure I insinuated no such thing. Pray look! what strange being is that?" And she turned towards the stage, where the conventional stage-Irishman was going through the approved Hibernian *répertoire*.

"A foreigner of distinction!" and Hogan affected to raise his glass. "I have read of such an animal in the books of English tourists."

"Is it not too bad that such a monstrosity should be presented as a national type? The Home Rulers ought to put that down."

"We don't know that," said he drily; "only for this sort of thing, how could the distinction be kept up? And then it flatters the English so. They always like to remind themselves of their great superiority over us; and this"

(nodding at the Paddy) "is a sort of pleasing reflection for them,—like *Punch's* Scotchmen, you know."

Nellie looked up into his eyes hastily, to see how far he was in earnest; and meeting a droll twinkle there, though to all other appearance he was perfectly solemn, she laughed outright behind her fan. "Well, the Scotch are not made fun of, as we are," said she.

"Indeed they are!—and though it is the fashion here to sneer at them as being unpatriotic, calling their country North Britain and all that, they are a deal more really national than we."

"I have heard that they deny their country, whenever they can."

"That's not so at all; rather, it's only a few. The Irish in America—the second generation, I mean—would like to pass themselves off for Knicker-Bockers if they could. I have been told so. Not that I think that matters; I wish they'd all do it," continued Hogan. "They keep pretty well to their flourishing—good gracious! From Captain Macmorris down to the present day they are at it: what in the world is the sense of it?"

"'*My nation! what ish my nation?*' Is that it? What a little gem that passage is!" laughed Miss Davoren. "Look at that man," continued she; "did you hear him say *h*opportunity? is it not absurd?"

"Yes," replied Hogan; "I fear the people who come here to learn the correct pronunciation of the Queen's English will carry away some rather erroneous impressions."

"What do you say? People come here—to the theatre—for that purpose?"

"Yes, certainly, Miss Davoren; I know people who do."

"Do look at that actor," cried Dorothy,—"he with the handkerchief: that's an imitation of Charles Mathews, in 'Cool as a Cucumber.'"

"I have seen Charles Mathews: we went to see him the last time I was in London; he was very far before that man." This was from Mrs. O'Hara.

"What a pity it is that ladies and gentlemen don't take to the profession!" said Nellie Davoren.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" exclaimed Miss O'Hegarty; "what are you saying, Nellie?"

"But, Cousin Dorothy, was not —— educated at Rugby? and Miss—— ?"

"Don't let me hear you talking so, child;" and Miss Dorothy turned away with a frown. An interval for refreshment occurred now, and the gentlemen availed themselves of it extensively. In this respect the Dublin audiences are yet far behind the Londoners; but, no doubt, time and assiduous copying of the British peculiarities will soon bring them abreast of their models. The pit was emptied in a few minutes. Boys just started in life, clerks and little shop-keepers, thronged into the bars; and every beverage, from the modest glass of beer to champagne and brandy and soda water, was called for. Saltasche and Hogan went out with the crowd. Hogan drank a glass of lemonade and sherry. Saltasche set down his glass untouched, and rushed to meet Poignarde, of whom he caught sight at the door. "Come and take a glass of brandy and water." The Captain accepted with pleasure; and when he had finished, leaving his companion, a young officer, followed Saltasche back to where Mrs. Poignarde was sitting alone.

"Adelaide, you met Mr. Saltasche before."

She looked up, and bowed and smiled. He seated himself beside her.

"You don't seem to care for this play, Mrs. Poignarde?"

"Well, no; I confess I do not."

"After the London theatres it must seem very poor and shabby to you."

"Well, I did not draw any comparison between them."

"Have you been in Paris?"

"Never."

"Ah! that's a pleasure to come. You like travelling, of course?"

All this was uttered by Mr. Saltasche in his most courteous, suave tone, with the air of deferential interest which in spite of oneself attracts at last.

She glanced at him a little suspiciously, as if doubtful of his meaning, and said distantly, "My experience of travelling has been limited to the regimental changes between London and Shorncliffe and Aldershot; we were in Cork, too, for a few months."

"A nice rainy place!"

"Not so bad as Dublin, though"; and she

shivered a little. "I was born in South America, and have a dim remembrance of warmth and bright colours and perpetual sun. It may be only a sort of instinct, but I do hate this damp cold."

He looked at her sympathetically.

"Well, we make up for it," he said, "with our gaieties. These three months to come form our season. You go to many balls?"

"Ah! I know so few of your people here. I don't make acquaintances. I wonder where Eric has gone," she added suddenly, noticing that her husband had left his seat for the second time. "Ah! here comes Mr. Grey." Saltasche bowed, recognizing in him the son of a clergyman of his acquaintance; and seeing Poignarde's sullen countenance in the background, his eyes looking rather lowering from the effects of a second potation, he judged it well to withdraw and return to his own seat. So after a word of adieu, distantly and coldly pronounced by Mrs. Poignarde, he left her.

"Do you know Saltasche, Mrs. Poignarde?" asked young Grey.

"Well, hardly."

"I know him right well: he is a very rich fellow—has a beautiful house in our parish; very charitable, and that sort of thing."

"Is he?"

"He's worth fifty thousand pounds; and an incorrigible bachelor."

"Really!" She turned languidly, and cast a look across the theatre at Saltasche and his companion, who were sitting opposite. Saltasche was not the more interesting of the two. Hogan was taller and younger, and his bright thin face and keen eyes seemed to take in everything. Saltasche leaned back on one elbow, and out of his half-closed eyes looked far more at the audience than at the play; every now and again he directed his eyes on herself. She saw this too, and was amused at it.

When the first piece was over, she observed that his companion went out, with the ladies who were sitting next him; he remained, as she did, for the after-piece. When it was finished they all rose to go; and in the throng on the staircase Saltasche pressed his way until close beside her. She was leaning on young Grey's arm, her husband following

behind: and in a bevy of beautiful women assembled from all parts of Ireland, Saltasche in his own mind decreed her the palm. Standing in the full blaze of the chandeliers, amid all the glare of colours around, the slight lithe figure and small glossy head so proudly carried, attracted more admiration than the celebrated Galway belle, Miss —— herself. She seemed so utterly unconscious: not Lady St. —— herself, attended by her court, could have shown more self-possession and haughty indifference. They passed down slowly; and it was not until after a long wait below that a cab was found. Saltasche stood close at the door and handed her in. He succeeded in his aim, which was to hear the address given to the cabman.

"3, Park Villas, Inchicore," growled Poignarde.

Saltasche took out his pocket-book, and turned to the lamp to scribble it down. As he did so, he struck something with his foot on the step of the colonnade. Stooping, he found a broken fan of ivory and scarlet feathers, and on the handle a monogram, "A. C.," in curiously entwined

raised letters. A smile of triumph lit up his face as he examined his prize; he rubbed the dust off it with his handkerchief, and put it carefully in his pocket.

We must return to our party, whose fortunes we have abandoned for a while to trace the devious ways of Mr. Cosmo Saltasche. Hogan continued to sit next Nellie, drinking in the light of her candid eyes, watching her clear profile, the lines of which were as fine and pure as those of a Roman cameo, watching every stir, every movement—so unstudied, yet so graceful, so natural and so fitting—listening to the laughing remarks, sensible and straightforward, without a trace of worldly cunning or *arrière pensée* in them. He had caught a glimpse ere now of Diana Bursford, who was seated near, and who cast now and anon cold watchful glances in his direction; he had paid a visit at her house that afternoon, and had quitted it steeped to the eyes in the flattery she so well knew how to ply. He knew she expected, and that she had a right to expect him to go to her; but Nellie's fresh beauty chained him beside her, and Diana looked and smiled in vain.

Hogan parted from Miss O'Hegarty's party at the door of the theatre, leaving Dicky to escort them home. That young gentleman, who was in high good-humour, seated himself in the cab beside his sister. Everything had succeeded with him; and he already, in his mind's eye, grasped the fruit of his plans. He had overheard Mrs. O'Hara ask Dorothy who that handsome lad was, and had noticed Dorothy's pleased air in replying. He felt an ideal half-sovereign in his pocket, as securely as if he already possessed it. He waited patiently till they got out at the door in Fitzgerald Place.

"Come in, Dicky dear; I want you one minute," said Miss O'Hegarty, when the hall-door opened for them, and the cook with a tallow candle (Peter, the independent, had gone to bed) proceeded to light the candles on the hall table.

"See, Dicky; pay the cabman, and keep the change for yourself"; and she handed him three five-shilling pieces. "You must have something for being so good and considerate."

Dicky's heart throbbed with delight; he

quickly took his leave, with many thanks for the liberal tip, and bestowing eighteen-pence on the cabman, buttoned up his top-coat and strode off to catch the last train. Thirteen-and-sixpence, exactly one-half of his subscription, he counted into his drawer when he got home. Nellie and his mother were good for five shillings between them, at least. He had a florin of his own: six shillings only remained to be got together; and he tucked himself up in bed cogitating how to make up that deficit, more anxiously and eagerly than ever Chancellor of the Exchequer brooded over a shortcoming in his Budget.

CHAPTER III.

"JACK CADE.—Be it known unto thee by these presents, that I am the besom that must sweep the court clean of such filth as thou art. Thou hast most traitorously corrupted the youth of the realm in creating a grammar school; and whereas, before our forefathers had no other books but the score and the tally, thou hast caused printing to be used; and contrary to the King, his crown and dignity, thou hast built a paper mill. It will be proved to thy face that thou hast men about thee that usually talk of a noun and a verb; and such abominable words as no Christian ear can endure to hear."—*King Henry VI., Part Second.*

MR. SALTASCHE, who had been obliged to go to London for a couple of days on business, had telegraphed to Hogan from the Westminster Palace Hotel that he must see him on Saturday, and desired him to engage seats for the theatre, it being a Command night, and to meet him at the Melbourne Hotel at five to dinner. Hogan obeyed, being on his own side equally desirous to settle matters with regard to the Parliamentary business. After much and anxious consideration, he had deter-

mined to accept. The Bishop declined to interfere—saying that Hogan was as well aware of the risks as himself, and that, after all, it might be cheaper to try now than at the General Election, when the Tories would certainly be measuring their strength against the present Government, and entailing thereby a larger outlay. So, not without misgivings, he gave orders to his broker to sell out his shares of Great Southern Railway stock, and lodged the proceeds in the Bank to meet the expenses of his candidature.

At five o'clock be presented himself at the front entrance of the Melbourne, and found his friend standing in the hall, fresh and trim, and with a superb dark-red camellia in the lapel of his dress-coat.

"How do you do, Mr. Hogan? I'm glad to see you. No, I'm not a bit tired; too old a stager, I assure you. Come along: this way;" and so, talking all the while, they followed a waiter into a comfortable private room, where a round table was laid for two. Mr. Saltasche had ordered a capital dinner; the wines were the best to be had, the fish unexceptionable, and the *menu* carefully chosen. No word of

business was uttered by either of the men until the last dish had disappeared. Saltasche threw himself back in his chair, which he had turned round towards the fire, and pointing to the opposite end of the hearthrug, motioned Hogan to bring up his.

The barrister changed his seat, pushing up his wine-glass and plate, and Saltasche opened the ball.

"Well, Mr. Hogan, about the business we were talking of: have you made up your mind?"

"Yes, Mr. Saltasche; I have decided to offer myself as a candidate for Peatstown. I need not tell you what a loss it will be to me if I fail."

"Don't speak of failure. Pshaw, man, you are perfectly safe. Your attorney is ——?"

"Mr. Muldoon. I mean, he will act for me, for as yet of course he knows nothing of my intention. I have pretty well decided the platform and address. Home Rule, absolute and unconditional; clerical control of Education, Tenant Right, Amnesty, and—ah—oh, of course the Holy Father's grievances. I think that's the whole list."

"By Jove, a complete litany, too!" said Saltasche; and he grinned to himself as he pictured Lord Brayhead's face on hearing the last item of the programme. What a pill that would be for the "swaddling lord" to bolt! "Well," continued he aloud, "of all your platform, you have not one solid, practical scheme: not one. Home Rule looks the only thing likely to raise a stir in the House. Clerical Education—won't hold water, that notion; the Government cannot, without giving the lie direct to their own principles, grant a scheme such as would satisfy the Cardinal. Tenant Right, or Fixity of Tenure, is blocked too; at least, until the days of universal suffrage, when the House will be full of Radicals and Reds, and them only. I decline altogether to give an opinion on Amnesty; a few blackguards more or less at large in society is of no great account; but the *moral* of the army would be injured by such a concession. And as for the Holy Father's grievances, what! do you want to embroil the Government with Victor Emanuel?"

"Bah! don't go dissecting me so pitilessly as that. My conscientious opinion is that

Home Rule for this country, and Scotland too, would be very beneficial. The country is really suffering by having everything drained out of it to London. Absenteeism has swelled to a fearful extent; you must see it yourself. People all flocking over to London, and the very people who are most wanted here: nearly all the brains of both countries are drained by the capital. It won't end well; I promise you it won't. And the evil consequences of it are already beginning to show themselves. I cannot see why statesmen refuse to entertain the idea. It seems to be too much the fashion to smell treason in every Irish project. People overlook the real good that lies beneath."

"Well, I don't doubt there is something in your views; but, Mr. Hogan, what the people mean by Home Rule—the people who are sending you to Parliament to demand it for them—is a rather more highly-coloured article. They want what O'Connell was always dangling before their eyes—a fight. Then another set want, not a mere Legislative Chamber, but separation and independence; and that third class of Irish malcontents, the returned Americans, and those whom they have infected, want a

Republic. I'll tell you, of all other things in the world, what completely proves to me the impossibility of this scheme is the opposition of the clergy to it."

"They have not opposed it," interrupted Hogan hastily; "I know some priests who are in favour of the movement; there are, indeed, a great number; but, like all sensible men, they are waiting to see their way clearly before them."

"Ah! you will see in the long run. They don't oppose it now, because they would set the people against their nominees at the General Election. They may be wanting also to reserve it for a threat in case the Education Bill doesn't please them; but everywhere the Ultramontanes ——"

"Now," interrupted Hogan again, "pardon me, Mr. Saltasche,—there you are falling into the cardinal error of the general Protestant public, in laying national agitation to the charge of the Ultramontane party. That party has no existence in Ireland. There are, of course, a few dignitaries and a few priests here and there whose views are identical with those popularly ascribed to Ultramontanes.

But the reason that the clergy oppose the mixed system is diametrically opposite to that generally imagined—that is, the reason given by the English journalists."

"Humph! and now tell me what is this opposite reason?"

"In one word," returned Hogan, "proselytism; and that includes nationalism. Little wonder, indeed, that the people follow the priests to the poll! They were always the very purest patriots. Look what the priests suffered in old times for their flocks. The early Christian martyrs were never more persecuted and hunted; that is not forgotten yet."

"True, but *that is not any longer so;* and I think the clergy of the present day are rather trading on the reputation of their ancestors than taking any pains to earn one for themselves."

"That's as may be," returned the barrister. "You remember, Mr. Saltasche, that in speaking this way to you I do so as to one who is above all prejudice, party or religious."

"Quite so, quite so," assented Saltasche.

"People blame them here for not accepting

the purely secular education, and providing religious instruction separately for themselves. They do that in Scotland. But how could they depend on the secular books and secular teachers provided by a Government which made the introduction of some proselytizing subject an integral part of every educational scheme ever propounded, and, as I told you before, looked upon this proceeding as one calculated to win the allegiance of the natives as well as their souls? There could not be found a means better calculated than this blending of apostasy with treachery to turn the people against it."

"Ah! that's all over and past now. The devil of it is, you won't let the hatchet be buried."

"Won't let the hatchet be buried!" And Hogan laughed out. "Why, these things are always present to their minds; they are never forgotten—never will be, either. It's long enough since the Tithe was abolished, but the people will tell you stories of that time with as much gusto as if it were yesterday. Tradition never dies: faith, I think the older it is the better, like whiskey."

"They are incorrigible; and where are they to be got at? Every door seems to be shut to improvement. The famine, as the English *Times* said, solved a great difficulty: not altogether. Ha! ha!"

"Not quite all"; and Hogan laughed too. "Emigration did a good deal. By themselves the people now could do nothing: there are too few of them. A mass meeting such as O'Connell used to treat them to would be impossible now."

"Oh, utterly, utterly. By-the-bye, do you count on the support of the Bishop of the diocese? Can your interest do anything for you with him? The contest is doubtful, you see."

"I could not say. So much depends on the parish priests. If he favours Home Rule, all's well. He may prefer that some one with local interest and influence should get in. However, even if Lord Kilboggan's nephew does come forward, I shall not care. You see the family are unpopular—rackrenting absentees! What hold they have over the priests remains to be tried; but just at present I could get in very easily on Home Rule alone."

"You think so," said Saltasche, nodding his head as if satisfied. "You will soon have an opportunity of trying, for I'm told there are no hopes whatever of the member's recovery. Try this Burgundy: very fine; perhaps you would prefer dry sherry. An olive, please."

Saltasche now lighted a cheroot, and began to smoke slowly and seriously.

"I called round at Mrs. Bursford's the day before yesterday," began Hogan, who was lighting his cigar at the gaselier.

Saltasche twisted his head on one side, so as to get a clear view unobscured by the smoke, and looked keenly at him. Then he turned his eyes towards the fire, and first exhaling a huge cloud, remarked indifferently, "Indeed: clever, stylish girl that. Did she settle with you about my charitable concert?"

"Bah!" said Hogan, "that question settles itself. I can't have anything to do with it. Impossible!—a Protestant affair!"

"Pish! to be sure. I forgot: how stupid of me! How did you like the young lady?"

"Very clever, charming girl; very stylish indeed; fine looking," said Hogan, quite warmly. He had been so plied with subtlest

flattery by the practised Diana that his unaccustomed brain was reeling. How well he remembered the scene! The half-light, the drawn curtain of blue brocade shedding a softening shadow on her blonde hair, the glowing hearth, the perfume, the softness and sweetness; and the low coaxing voice and veiled eyes looking into his as if every word he uttered had a thousand meanings and his listener feared to lose a single one.

"Very highly connected family, that is." Saltasche, as he spoke, knocked the ash off his cigar. "Very: they go into the best set, here and in London. The mother has immense influence."

Hogan, who seemed to have had some idea conjured up in his mind by his friend's last speech, only smiled in reply; and after a few minutes spent in smoking silently, took his cigar between thumb and forefinger, and said to Saltasche,—

"Were there no brothers, eh? I fancied I heard Miss Bursford had brothers."

Mr. Saltasche pursed up his lips sententiously. "Certainly, my dear fellow; two,—no, three of them."

"Dead—eh?"

"Well, they might as well be. Two of them ran wild; they were all older than the girl. And one—well, for some particular and not very well-known reason—lives in New Zealand. He made a *mésalliance*, I believe. The others disappeared *in toto*."

"Dear me! What an astonishing thing, all three to go to the bad! How very unfortunate for the family! It is surprising how many men go to the deuce nowadays. Among my contemporaries at college, I assure you I could count up a large proportion of black sheep."

"Yes, indeed. The trouble is, you see, they begin at it so young now—seem so completely their own masters; moreover, young fellows go in for a different sort of wild-oat sowing now to what they used to do. It is no longer the wild, rough escapades and practical joking that used to engage them. Their ways are more costly; instead of getting drunk periodically, they have taken to tippling daily, and that sort of thing generally. A vicious lot altogether!"

Hogan, whose mind was running on a story he had heard that morning, of the death of a

young friend of his own, or rather the son of a friend—a lad of twenty—who had "gone the pace that kills" for the last three years or so, nodded assent. How many men, indeed, had he seen fall by the way, even in the short measure of the road of life that he had travelled!

Saltasche, hearing the hall clock strike the quarter past eight, threw the butt of his cheroot in the fire. "Time we were off, by Jove! Mr. Hogan, shall we walk down?"

"Yes, if you please; it's a fine, clear night."

They set out arm-in-arm, and turning down Kildare Street, walked smartly in the direction of the Hawkins Street Theatre.

"I must ask you to allow me to leave early—at least, as soon as the piece is over. I could not stay for the after-piece," said Hogan.

"Oh, by all means; do what you like. I don't think I'll stop, either. I am rather tired. Some rascals in London been trying to catch me out, rigging the market. I've settled them, though. I calculate to clear fifteen thousand by the operations I have arranged yonder; in a week hence, too."

"Ha!" said Hogan, drawing in a deep breath. A sort of wonder, not unmixed with envy, filled him. A sudden thought occurred to him. The twelve hundred pounds lying at his bankers': why not ask Saltasche to use it, at a fair rate of interest? The bank gave only three per cent.—nothing at all. Saltasche would think nothing of obliging him, he was sure; yet it was with a slight feeling of nervousness he began.

"I—er—have a thousand or so in the Connaught Bank at this moment. Mr. Stonelock sold out my shares the other day. I lodged it to meet electioneering expenses. It may remain there some months, perhaps."

Saltasche turned with a sort of bound, and his brown eyes kindled with a sudden flash. "You'd like me to invest it—eh? Of course, of course; bring it to me to-morrow, and I'll see if I can't put you up to a good thing with it. Let's see: it must be invested where it can be got at easily, hey?"

"I don't mind telling you, Mr. Saltasche, it's pretty near all I have in this world. I just make, altogether, by my profession about three hundred a year, or less; and my expenses are

large. Of course my income is increasing yearly."

Saltasche's face had that quiet, unmoved look that tells of rapt attention; and a glimmer in his eyes—could Hogan have seen them—denoted that this intelligence was a mark added to his score.

"All right," said he, quietly. "There are plenty of ways for a man like you to get on. You write, I know. I have been thinking of starting a newspaper. Not here—dear no! In London. There is a firm in Sycamore Alley, Stier and Bruen, with whom I deal largely; and they have been meditating that move for some time. You have no idea what a help a well-managed, smartly-written paper is in business. A circulation once secured, you can do anything with it. You would be very useful as editor, or nominal editor, with some practical, experienced man in the background, until you get well started. Hey? Thus you see you have an independence clear, and a position, moreover, as editor, second only to your membership."

"It looks remarkably enticing, I confess," said Hogan thoughtfully; "but I am not

returned yet, and I am not sufficiently practised as a ready writer to take such a post as editorship."

"Bah! Keep your hand in; it is an invaluable accomplishment. I had a great turn myself that way, now. Yes, by Jove, I remember the day when I could have turned you out an article in first-rate style—trenchant and clear, you know: I often lament that my time is so taken up. One sees a thing requiring an answer so frequently. The *Financial Review* the other day had some rot on 'Economic Values: the Comparative History of them.' He hadn't a notion of the true origin of *agiotage*. My fingers itched to reply to him; but time,"—and Mr. Saltasche shrugged his square shoulders,—"time I never have."

A sneer curled Hogan's lips. "Time, indeed," thought he; "that's all that's wanting, of course!" Then the sneer turned into a good-humoured smile at his friend's absurdity: "We all have our little weaknesses." Then aloud, "It doesn't take so long, I assure you: one knocks off a thing of that sort in—er—an hour or so. I nev——"

"Er—ah! I daresay. You fellars that have the trick, er—practice, er—and *leisure*."

By this time they had reached the hideous gateway of the Royal.

CHAPTER IV.

"Les rivières sont des chemins qui marchent, et qui portent où l'on veut aller."—*Pensées de Pascal.*

THE day but one after the evening in the theatre, Mr. Saltasche, towards three o'clock in the afternoon, leisurely descended the handsome granite steps of his office. He stood for an instant thinking, when he reached the lowest step; then, having felt in his coat-pocket with one hand, he nodded as if reassured, and looked across to the cab-stand by King William's statue. The jarvey whose turn it was, being at the head of the stand, to obey a signal, jumped quickly on the "driving side" of his vehicle, and was speedily at Mr. Saltasche's orders. While waiting the arrival of his conveyance, the gentleman in question cast a scrutinizing look over his own dress, and having buttoned up his perfectly fitting brown surtout and flicked a faint trace of dust off his boots with his white silk hand-

kerchief, gave his hat a cock and jumped lightly into his seat.

"Where now, your honour?" asked the jarvey.

"Er—Kingsbridge; and take the far side of the river."

The car rolled quickly down Westmoreland Street, and threaded its way across the bridge, now densely thronged with traffic; and turning to the left, held on along the Quay. They passed the Four Courts rapidly; Saltasche looked keenly at the groups by the railings, but failed to recognize anybody. Park Gate Street was soon reached. Here he dismissed his driver, and turning to the left again, kept the high-road for a few minutes until he found the terrace he was looking for.

"Just what I expected," he muttered to himself: "dingy lodgings. Let's see," and he vainly tried to decipher a half-obliterated inscription on the corner house of the row of little houses, seven or eight of which stood removed from the road by some forty feet of ill-kept front-gardens.

He opened the gate of the third house, and

walked up the long weed-grown path; as he did so he became aware of a pianist, evidently in the house to which he was going, practising with a vigorous hand noisy scales and exercises, and breaking now and again into great wild chords and *cadenzas*. His skilled ear detected at once a master-hand: no tyro ever struck so boldly, or with such finished precision.

His knock brought a dirty servant-girl, with smirched visage and hands so black and grimy that it was not without some misgiving that he entrusted his card to them.

"Poignarde is not at home," he thought, as he ascended the little narrow stairs after his guide. "I should imagine not, indeed; and my little beauty consoles herself with music pending his return."

"A gentleman, ma'am," said the menial, laying the card on the piano. Mrs. Poignarde ceased playing, and took it up between her fore and second finger.

"Did you say Captain Poignarde was out?"

Saltasche grinned as he heard the imperious tone of this question outside the door.

The servant, instead of answering, opened the door wide; and the gentleman with his sweetest smile presented himself. Mrs. Poignarde was not a whit embarrassed, and held out three fingers of her right hand, looking at her visitor the while with a blended expression of astonishment, greeting, and interrogation.

Saltasche took her taper white fingers and bowed over them.

"How do you do, Mrs. Poignarde? Did you get home safely on Saturday? Capital piece, now, was it not? You reached home quite safely? No cold? No annoyance? Such a long drive!"

All this and much more was uttered in the most suave, finished, courteous tone. The little lady in black, who was anything but in gracious humour, was first amused, then roused, and at last pleased and quite won to good humour by the well-laid plan of attack. She smiled, and pointing to an easy-chair by the fire, seated herself with her side-face to the window nearly opposite.

"We got home very well. It was very stupid, though; and to add to my vexation, I

lost my fan. I was so sorry and put out about it; and, of course, I have no chance of ever seeing it again. It was my poor uncle Rodolphe's last gift."

Saltasche smiled quite pleasantly. "I think I can give you some intelligence of it"; and he took a tissue-paper parcel out of his pocket as he spoke, and unrolling it leisurely, held up before her wondering eyes the ivory and scarlet of her treasure.

She gave a little scream of joy, and rising hastily, held out both hands to take it; then examining it closely, and holding up a broken scarlet ribbon, exclaimed,—

"See there: that went so, round my wrist; something must have broken or cut it, and I dropped it. How did you find it? And how good of you to bring it to me!"

"Do you remember getting into your cab?" said he. "You must have let it slip into the folds of your dress or mantle. I found it at my feet, under the colonnade. Then the initials, you see, guided me where to bring it."

"How really good of you! I would not have lost it for the world"; and she raised her fine liquid eyes with a look of real gratitude

full on his. "Poor Uncle Rodolphe!—his very last gift to me; and I never saw him again."

"You can't imagine how pleased I am, Mrs. Poignarde, to be the means of restoring it to you. I had no idea," he added, with a spark of curiosity in his look, "that, apart from its intrinsic value, it was such a treasure. Captain Poignarde is not in, then?"

"No," she answered. "Eric is scarcely ever here; at least, scarcely ever after twelve in the morning."

"And you, Mrs. Poignarde, beguile your time with your charming music, no doubt: I heard you just now. What a magnificent touch you have! Not at all a feminine one—so strong and full." And he looked as if incredulous at her small, fine fingers. "Do play me something," he added entreatingly; "I am so passionately fond of music."

She assented, after but little demur. Perhaps there was a particle of vanity in her doing so. She saw he was really eager to hear her; and feeling exactly in the humour for playing, she sat down carelessly and plunged into Mendelssohn's well-known Andante. Her

piano was a Broadwood's cottage — one of the best make; and though now something worn, yet full and rich-toned. Her manipulation was splendid, and the rich chords and subtle variations of light and shade were brought out in perfection. She sat easily and unmoved—not a trace of self-consciousness or effort marring the perfect performance. Saltasche was astonished beyond measure. He, while listening with a perfect sense of enjoyment, leaned his elbow on the back of his chair, and deliberately surveyed the room; small, grimy, and shabbily furnished. On an ottoman lay Mrs. Poignarde's black lace bonnet and veil, her little silk umbrella stood in a corner, and a pair of wash-leather gloves lay on the top of some whitey-brown packages on the sideboard. An untidy, ill-kept room—just the dwelling-place of an ill-conditioned, ill-mated couple. The woman who would spend a day in a chamber of that ilk must indeed be far gone on the road of despair and sullen indifference. Pipes and cigar-boxes were on the mantelpiece, and under the sideboard a little stack of soda-water bottles. Some trashy-looking books lay about; and on a footstool before the fire a hideous

bull-terrier, with a black face, was curled up. Not a flower, not a work-basket, not a single trace of a lady's presence, beyond the piano and a pile of well-bound music-books, was there in the room. The keen eye of Saltasche noted everything; and then returned to the musician, now drawing near to the *finale* of her piece. Ere her fingers had touched the closing chords, Saltasche was beside her, and seating himself on a chair at one end of the piano, he leaned his elbow upon it, and waited till the sound had died away.

"What a treat, Mrs. Poignarde!" murmured he; "how perfectly you play! That piece is simply superb. Your style is exactly French."

"I did take lessons from a Parisian," she returned, negligently running the right hand over arpeggio chords.

"It's a great charm, music; such a resource to you, too."

"Well, yes. At least," she added, "I expect it will be so one day." And she turned her head aside with a negligent, indifferent air, and then rose and went back towards her seat in the window.

"Oh, now, Mrs. Poignarde, will you not play me something more? Please do. I have heard from Mrs. Grey that you play Liszt's music so perfectly."

"Liszt's is too much for this little room."

"Will you help with our concert? Mrs. Grey must have told you of it. If you would only play a piece or two."

"Yes; Mrs. Grey has told me about it. But I do not care for playing in public. I don't know anybody here; I don't go into society at all." She turned as she spoke, and looked quickly down the road. "There comes Eric, you see, with that gentleman." And as she spoke she bent her head a little forward, and looked closely at the advancing figures. The result of this inspection was apparently displeasing to her; for a settled frown gathered on her face, and her lips curled impatiently. She rose and gathered up her music, after which she locked the piano. Saltasche, whom a glance out of window had satisfied as to the cause of the change of her expression, smiled half in pity, half contemptuously. Rising, he held out his hand, and said, "It is quite time I was back in the City, Mrs. Poignarde. I am very glad

to have been the medium of restoring to you your property." He spoke slowly and deliberately, watching her face; for he knew she was dying to escape before Poignarde should enter the room.

She looked at him frankly, as if she divined his kind thoughtfulness, and held out her hand.

"I thank you very much indeed; and in token of my sincerity you may tell the Greys I will play at their concert."

He held her soft white hand in his an instant; not venturing to press it, yet unwilling to let her go. Just then the swing of the gate was heard, and Poignarde's uncertain, heavy step on the gravel. She released her hand, and hastily picking up her bonnet, flashed one look, in which terror and excuse were blended, at him, and escaped off upstairs to her own room.

Poignarde entered the room. Glancing round with a sulky and stupid look, his eyes fell on the broker, who, quite at home, was reading a *Bell's Life* in an easy-chair.

"Hullo! Mr. Saltasche, eh? Glad to see you."

"I've been waiting for you, Poignarde. I came here on a double errand: to restore Mrs. Poignarde's fan (she lost it at the theatre on Saturday), and—ah—this to you, Captain." And as he spoke he handed a slip of grey paper across the table.

"I've had a run of luck lately," spoke the gallant officer, in a thick tone. "Hang it, man, when a fellow's got capital, the thing for him is to back the colour long enough; it's sure to come up if you just go on long enough. That's what it is: back the colour and stick to it. Keep at it," he muttered, nodding his head sapiently in the direction of his friend. "I say," he broke out suddenly, "you've not seen Adelaide—Ad'laide—eh! my wife, sir. She's locked herself in that beastly room of hers, I bet." And he rocked himself to and fro in his seat, staring fatuously at the bell-rope, and plainly calculating the exertion needful to make a lurch at it.

Saltasche rose, and stood between him and the fireplace, stroking his chin and looking critically, and with a smile on his lips, at the interesting figure of his client. It seemed to supply the key to a riddle rising in his mind;

for he glanced once more round the room, and nodded his head slightly, as if acknowledging to himself the fitness of things in general.

"Day, day, Captain!" said he, making a move to go. "I must be off; business in town."

"Take somethin'?" stuttered the Captain, on hospitality intent. "Ad'laide, I say, where's that ——?" and he gathered himself together as if for a plunge at the bell.

But Saltasche laid a heavy hand on his shoulder, and forced him down in his chair.

"I'll see you to-night, Cap.," said he, laughing. "Don't forget your — hey? — ah, ——" and he nodded towards the slip of paper lying on the table. "Bye, bye." He shut the door quickly, and was gone.

"What a pair!" thought he to himself. "I wonder will Mrs. Grey be able to tell me anything about her. She must have something in her head when she works up her music like that. Why, it's something superb. She is a lovely creature, too—a perfect *artiste*." All the way back he mused on the queerness and incongruousness of the scene he had left. The mean, untidy room; the most sordid

details of daily life obtruding themselves unabashed in every sense; and in the midst of it all, the determined, cold face, the slender, supple, black-robed figure of the musician—indifference and scorn on every beautiful line of her face—rapt, evidently, in her art, and bitter and cynical to all else. "She must have a history," thought he. "What a bitter look she gave at him coming in! And that fan, too—little vixen—she was pleased to get it back;" and he seemed to see the bright, glad look that flashed for an instant from between her white eyelids. And Poignarde: "Bet on the colour, and bet long enough." Saltasche grinned to himself as he remembered the tone and look with which this axiom was enunciated, and the appearance of the prophet himself: the bleared eyes, the trembling lips and hands, and the thick utterance. "Why in this world doesn't she leave him?" thought Mr. Saltasche.

There were reasons undreamt of by him. Adelaide Chrestien, for such was her (Mrs. Poignarde's) maiden name, had been the only child and heiress of a wealthy South American planter and merchant. On his death, which

occurred when she was a very young child, she had been adopted by her father's brother, who had absolute control over her fortune. Mr. Rodolphe Chrestien never married; and his niece, his only living relative, was reputed heiress to his wealth also. She was sent to England to be educated at a first-class school, in a manner befitting her condition and prospects in life. Here she made the acquaintance of the family of a school companion; and when about sixteen, met at their house, one summer vacation, Eric Poignarde, then a dashing cornet of dragoons,—deeply in debt, for his was one of the fastest regiments in London. The youth cast his eyes on the Brazilian heiress—an interesting and beautiful young girl, with the reputation of a fortune of nearly a quarter of a million; and with the aid of his relation, the school-girl friend, a clandestine correspondence was carried on.

In about six months more, Miss Chrestien eloped with the now almost penniless Poignarde, who believed that she was entitled to her fortune in her own right. She, filled with romance, had never dreamed of telling him that her uncle and guardian had unreserved

powers over the money bequeathed to her, and that all she possessed in her own right was five thousand pounds, which was hers by virtue of her mother's marriage settlement. However, the awakening came soon. Uncle Rodolphe, whom she had hoped to have won over in orthodox romantic fashion, had had ambitious designs for his niece, to whom he really was attached, and in whom centred all his ambition and hopes. Disappointed and furious on hearing of her marriage, he telegraphed some curt directions to his London agent, who, immediately on receiving them, sought an interview with the happy husband. Poignarde was informed that his wife's allowance would be paid quarterly, as heretofore, by the agents of Rodolphe Chrestien; and that on her attaining her majority the five thousand pounds would be paid over to her husband. The rest of Mr. Chrestien's money he intended to devote to the Public Works of Rio—the city in which he had amassed his colossal fortune. The agent added, as a piece of supererogatory information, that the fortune which Adelaide Chrestien would have inherited, had she shown a sense of duty to her

relative, amounted to nearly two millions English.

Poignarde reeled home, sick with fury; he cursed himself, his cousin, his wife—everything. What a prize he had missed! He had been swindled, he declared. The miserable five thousand would not pay his debts. Of course he was the victim, the injured one; her wretched situation in no way concerned him. He quarrelled with his relatives, at whose house he had met his school-girl wife; blaming them, with the shortsighted rage of disappointed egotism, for their instrumentality—innocent enough, in truth—in his downfall. He had to exchange out of the Guards, and getting a handsome sum of money into the bargain, he was enabled to settle his affairs; compromised with some creditors, paid one or two in full, and cheated the greater number. And then, having joined a line regiment, he took his wife, whom he began to treat with systematic brutality and neglect, to live in barracks with him.

She was too young to break her heart, and too vigorous of constitution to pine and waste in useless regrets. She retained

her own piano, and at all times passionately fond of music, devoted herself to it now with heart and soul—inspired by the double purpose of one day making a living by it as a profession, and also as a present resource in the long hours of tedium and *ennui*, if not worse, that she had to spend by herself.

Poignarde drew her allowance and spent it; and had already, she knew, borrowed money at high rates of interest, to be repaid out of her five thousand pounds when it should fall due. So she had no hope but in herself; and worked and studied with a passionate persistency that astonished every one. Six hours a day was the minimum she allowed herself for practice; more frequently she sat at the piano all day long, with an interval for a walk in some quiet, unfrequented direction.

She and her husband hated each other with that persistency and thoroughness only to be found amongst married couples, and which hardens and grows with years of daily practice. It is a common enough mistake that people make when they suppose that time wears out

inequalities of disposition and renders us less sensitive to the unpleasantnesses and peculiarities of the people with whom we live. Poignarde detested his wife more and more: every day, week, month, and year, added in intensity and bitterness to the store. And with her, the desire to be free, now that she had attained her majority and saw the last few hundred pounds vanishing in the same way as the rest —swallowed up by the usurers, and squandered in vice—became a passion too strong almost for endurance. Yet her plans were misty and vague. Friends she had none; Poignarde had an aunt and cousin in London, both elderly and respectable women; and she counted that when the crash came, when he would be forced to go to India or on some other foreign service, she might find a temporary shelter with them, and remain until she earned enough to carry her out to Rio, to plead her cause in person to Rodolphe Chrestien. Every letter she addressed to him had been returned unopened; but she felt sure he would pity her when once the true story had been told him.

Sometimes visions of triumphs in the

musical world would pass before her overworked brain: she fancied herself an Arabella Goddard or a Madame Schumann; and then she would dream of a public concert in Rio. She almost saw herself, dressed in white, the centre-point of a crowd of listeners,—everybody hushed and silent; the Spanish women, with their dark eyes bent upon her enviously and curiously, keeping even their feather fans immovable lest the faint rustle should cause them to lose a note; and amongst the throng, listening and watching, Uncle Rodolphe's hard determined face, with his white hair and wavy moustache, like the Emperor's. He, as one of the notables, though, would be on the platform and quite close: she would play to him and for him; and he would listen to her and forgive her, and take her away where Eric could never follow.

So she would dream over her instrument, hardly knowing what she did, and playing from that wonderful memory which only born musicians like her, who assimilate and make a piece a part of themselves, ever have.

With Poignarde she was silent and distant, and as much as possible avoided provoking any of his outbursts of brutality. When he commenced to rail at and taunt her, she opposed him by a silence which no utterance of his could induce her to break. She knew the end was approaching fast. The five thousand pounds had melted away to as many hundreds, though she was not as yet more than six months past her majority. Poignarde was utterly unable to stop drinking and gambling; both had become a part of his nature. Another year, she thought, would set a term to her punishment; and she worked harder than ever.

Saltasche reached his office again, shortly after four. Running up the stairs, he almost knocked against Lord Brayhead, who was coming down for the second time—having, with the fretful impatience characteristic of him, been twice within an hour to see if the broker had returned.

"I have been waiting for you, Mr. Saltasche," he began in an aggrieved tone; "I have an important message for you."

Saltasche quickly opened the glass-panelled

door leading into his office, and held it for his client to pass before him.

"Mr. Wyldoates cannot live twenty-four hours; and I have a telegram to the effect that Lord Kilboggan will send over his eldest nephew, Theodore Wyldoates, the *attaché* at Constantinople, to stand for the seat in the Conservative interest."

"Ah! no matter, my lord. Hogan is the man: I shall have him in Peatstown the day after to-morrow—or to-morrow, if you like. And now about money matters. He has money; but of course your lordship is aware we are bound to do something. He is running a great risk—a very great risk."

"I will allow him to draw upon me for one-third of the expenses."

Saltasche gave his lordship to understand pretty plainly that he must be more liberal; that the Government would not assist Mr. Hogan; and that, the Dissolution being so near at hand, he could not afford to risk his capital. It was finally arranged that Lord Brayhead should pay two-thirds of the sum-total, and it was also stipulated that Mr. Hogan was to be very discreet concerning the transaction: in

fact, he was to be made, if possible, to understand that it was in the form of a loan, rather than anything else, that the money was to be forthcoming. After a long consultation—a consultation which the impetuous Mr. Saltasche vainly endeavoured to cut short—Lord Brayhead took his leave, in great anxiety and tribulation as to the success of his dubious venture.

Saltasche sent a messenger with a note to Hogan's lodgings, and betook himself home. He was eager to see Mrs. Grey, his neighbour at Green Lanes, to learn from her the history, if history there were (and if she knew it), of Adelaide Poignarde.

Mrs. Grey and Poignarde were in some remote way connected through his aunt and cousin the Stroudes in London; and Saltasche, confident in his own powers of suasion, calculated on hearing the whole story ere he was many hours older.

CHAPTER V.

"Why did I ever one brief moment's space,
But parley with this filthy Belial?
. . . . Was it the fear
Of being behind the world, which is the wicked?"

A. H. Clough.

"Come, then,
And with my aid go into good society.
Life little loves, 'tis true, this peevish piety;
Even they with whom it thinks to be securest—
Your most religious, delicatest, purest—
Discern, and show as pious people can
Their feelings, that you are not quite a man."

Edan.

STRANGE to relate, Dicky Davoren's sanguine expectations concerning his friend Orpen's speculation were fully realized. Mr. Orpen took fifteen to one against a horse which won the Churton Cup; and the firm of bookmakers, on the Monday after the race, sent a cheque for sixty-five pounds, payable at the Bank of Ireland, to that gentleman. On Tuesday morning, therefore, Mr. Orpen's advent (he

was not a resident student) was anxiously watched for in the precincts of Botany Bay. Mr. Gagan, and his friend and cousin Tad Griffiths, a youth who had been oftener on the verge of expulsion than anybody else in Trinity, stuck their heads out of window every two minutes.

At last Orpen, Mahoney Quain, and Dicky Davoren came in sight; they walked quietly and decorously along until they turned the corner and were out of sight of the crowd coming out of the morning lecture; then the exuberance of Mr. Quain's animal spirits broke forth. Lifting Dicky over his head with both hands, he playfully gave him his choice of having his head knocked against the wall or the granite pavement. Dicky snatched off his tormentor's mortarboard, and shied it as well as he could, considering the disabilities of his position, down the path. The young giant was on the point of putting his threat into execution, when Dicky, seeing Orpen, who with his usual matter-of-fact business-like way had walked on ahead, turning into the doorway leading to their destination, raised the alarm, "There's Orpen bolting with the money!" Mr. Quain,

entering into the spirit of the suggestion with perhaps more completeness than its originator intended or wished, dropped his burden on the flags, and taking as many steps at a time as his long legs would compass, rushed up the stairs. Dicky followed, and they all burst into the room at once.

After an interval of horse-play, Mr. Orpen produced a bundle of notes, the letters which had been received from the bookmakers, and their statement of accounts. According to this document, the commission at ten per cent. amounted to seven pounds ten; then some other items were alleged, in order to justify their retention of two pounds ten as well: in all ten pounds; which, deducted from the profits of the transaction, left sixty-five pounds (seventy including the stake) to be divided among the four subscribers. Mr. Orpen handed each gentleman a clean ten-pound note, then a five-pound, two one-pound notes, and a half-sovereign. Then ensued a general reckoning of scores.

Mr. Gagan had drawn largely in advance of the expected dividend. His Ulster coat hung in its accustomed place behind the door—a place,

indeed, which knew it seldomer than did the shelves of the accommodating "bank." A gold seal-ring and pin formed conspicuous items of his toilette, and the bookshelves groaned under the unaccustomed weight of a complete set of medical and classical books. The box of tobacco on the chimneypiece was so full that the lid refused to shut down, and the fragrant bird's-eye overflowed around it. A new pipe was stuck in the rack above the chimneypiece, and bottles of porter, ginger-beer and ale for shandy-gaff; together with spirits and soda-water, in thoughtful deference to Mr. Orpen's advanced tastes, littered the apartment.

Mr. Gagan took out a battered pocket-book and a metallic pencil, and sitting on the table, began to tot up a column of very straggling entries.

"Hold your row, Mahoney, will you? Where was I? Yes, the fees, six pound ten; and 'taking out' my traps was two more; and, Orpen, what's your little bill —hey?"

"You know right well; so pay up, and look pleasant over it," was Mr. Orpen's answer,

delivered in a jocular good-humoured tone, as of one already in possession of the amount.

Mr. Gagan responded by flinging three sovereigns and some silver on the table; then he counted the remainder and stuffed it in his pockets. Mr. Tad Griffiths was paid his small account by his friend Mahoney, who said, good-naturedly,—

"Where were you this age, Tad? You might have been in for this pot of luck if we'd only seen you."

Mr. Tad replied by a comical grimace.

"I had to keep quiet. Got in a ruction down on the Quay; and didn't they follow me half over the city? I never got in till next day at all, and I was watched for at the gates for nearly a week; so I just read up that blessed Hebrew for old what's-his-name. I say, Gagan, are these bottles here to be looked at, or are you bloated capitalists going to stand treat?"

The various drinkables were quickly discussed. Dicky Davoren, who had scant inclination for stout or ale so early in the day as twelve o'clock, nevertheless drank glass for glass with his more inured companions; and then various

plans of amusement were broached and discussed. At last it was settled that they were to drive down on an outside car to Bray, and dine at the hotel, then return to town and visit the theatre (not the Royal,—a minor theatre, of not too good repute, was recommended by Mr. Orpen, and agreed on by the young gentlemen); and finally wind up with a thorough spree anywhere: in fact, to make a night of it. When these preliminaries had been arranged, Dicky begged for time to run out on some errands of his own. Orpen, who had no notion of losing sight of him while the seventeen pounds was in existence, cautioned him not to be long, or they might start without him. Dicky, who had very little intention of missing the fun, hastened across College Green and plunged into a dirty lane not far up Dame Street. Out of this he emerged in a moment or two, carrying a large strap full of books under his arm; then he disappeared into a hatter's, and bought a low hat, which, with the books, he asked to have kept for him until next day. He then, with unwonted care, folded up the receipted bill, putting it carefully in his pocket.

As he stood for a moment waiting to let a number of carts pass before crossing the Green again, he became aware of a hand laid on his shoulder. Looking up quickly, he saw Hogan and Mr. Saltasche.

"Do you care to earn fifteen pounds, Davoren, eh?" said Hogan, with a good-humoured smile.

"Yes! I've no objection," answered the youth coolly enough, and wondering to himself if the floods of Pactolus were not pouring themselves at his feet.

"Would you like to help in an election, eh? Will you be sub-sheriff? There will be an election at Peatstown directly."

"Peatstown! Oh! I know Peatstown. I have been there: my father has a cousin, a big farmer there I've often been there with him."

"By Jove! have you, though?" Saltasche now struck in. "Then write to him, Master —*Mr.* Davoren" (he corrected himself),—"and tell him you'll bring down your friend the new member that is to be, and introduce him to all of them." And Mr. Saltasche nodded at Hogan, as much as to say, "This is he."

"You know Mr. Muldoon's son, Ignatius?" asked Hogan; "he will be a sub-sheriff too, and you could work together."

"I shall be delighted," said Dicky; as indeed he was.

And the next day, when he returned home at midday sick and weary, and with only seven pounds of the seventeen left, he thought over Mr. Hogan's proposal, and made up his mind that the projected expedition would be very desirable indeed. He felt miserable and ill, and crept up to bed, avoiding Nellie, and never going near his mother's room until late in the afternoon; then, after having bribed a servant to procure him a bottle of soda-water, he felt somewhat more comfortable, and concocting a lie about having lost the last train and sleeping with a friend in town, presented himself and told his story with cool assurance. His sister, however, followed him out and began to question him.

"Where have you been? As for sleeping with Mulcahy, sir, look at your eyes! You have been up all night, I do believe."

"No such thing. It's biliousness. I don't feel at all well."

Still she distrusted, and as a last resort asked him sternly,—

"Where is the new hat you got seven-and-sixpence to buy, some days ago?"

For answer he nodded at the hat-rack in the hall, where the article in question hung. He had not forgotten to carry it and his books back with him. Nellie retreated, baffled, though by no means satisfied, to her mother's room. After a time she was called downstairs, and going into the parlour, found Dicky stretched on a sofa near the fire and shading his burning eyes from the light with his hand.

"Is that you, Nellie? I've a piece of news you would like to hear." Seeing that she paid him no attention, and was turning out of the room, he sat straight up on the sofa. "Your friend Mr. Hogan is going into Parliament soon."

"What do you say? Soon? And for what place, eh?"

"Yah! you'd like to know all about it," returned he mockingly, letting himself fall back into his recumbent position. "You wouldn't lend me that couple of shillings,

then, last week; so now find out for yourself, Miss."

"I really think you very mean to be taking all my money from me, that way, Dicky! It's most unmanly: and you never pay me back."

The youth made no reply, but taking a sovereign out of his pocket, jerked it silently across the room in her direction. Nellie picked it up in utter bewilderment, which increased when he jerked a second sovereign at her. Then he sat up again, and watched her face and attitude closely.

"Now, Miss Shylock, how much do I owe you now?"

"You owe me money still; but never mind that. Where did you get this? and how? Do tell me, Dicky."

"Never you mind. Am I to account for every penny to you, please? That's a joke! Listen: if you don't tell the governor on me, I'll let you keep that money, and—ah—I'll tell you all Mr. Hogan told me to-day."

"I shan't promise: if I am asked I must tell; you know that very well. And your conduct is scandalous. I heard of your card-playing in Mr. Saltasche's stable, with Jasper

Grey and the gardener and coachman, and drinking with them. Are you not ashamed? And how did you get into the house? Coming in at three in the morning through the window. However, I have had that nailed up, and a new lock put on the garden gate."

Mr. Dicky looked conscious and penitent—to outward view, at least; but in reality he was meditating which night his sister alluded to, because on one or two occasions the company at the stable card-parties had numbered other guests than those she mentioned. Who could have told? he wondered. The coachman's wife, no doubt: she was employed sometimes by Nellie, and had carried the story.

"Well, there's an end of that, since you've nailed up the window," he growled. In reality he had used another mode of ingress, and meant to use it again. "Now listen, Nellie: Mr. Hogan is going to stand for Peatstown (didn't you see in the *Enfranchiser* this morning the death of the member, Mr. Wyldoates, at Paris?), and he is going to take me down as sub-sheriff, —worth fifteen guineas, let alone the fun."

"Oh, I see," she cried, jumping to conclusions with the usual feminine alacrity; "and

you have been paid in advance! isn't that it?"

A sudden flash of intelligence illumined Mr. Dicky's rather heavy-looking eyes. It had not occurred to him to combine the circumstances so neatly; but now he did not scruple to avail himself of the junction so presented. So he nodded a sort of Burleigh nod, and lay down again, feeling quite sure his usual luck would carry the day.

The dinner passed off to his satisfaction. His father, who was tolerably indifferent, except for occasional spasmodic fits of severity, to Dicky's general conduct, asked no awkward questions, and accepted the glib excuse without comment. Not that he was unaware that it was a lie; but it did not suit with his temper at that time to investigate or sift the affair. Another time, as his son well knew, he would have encountered a torrent of questions, cross-questions, and perhaps blows, for a comparatively trivial offence. It all depended on the humour of the moment, and also on the personal bearing of the delinquency. If anybody made a complaint to himself of Dicky, and thus annoyed or disturbed him, woe betide

the lad! But anything that did not concern Mr. Davoren senior (however remotely) personally, was passed over comparatively unheeded; unless, as has been said, the escapade afforded an opportune vent for the ill-humour of the moment.

After dinner Nellie slipped up to her mother's room. Mr. Davoren went to town, as was his custom at times, to amuse himself; and Dicky, disinclined for out-door adventure or work, dragged a sofa up near the fire, and having turned out the gas and put fresh coal on the fire (for not being very well, he felt chilly), lay down for a sleep until eight o'clock tea.

At about half-past seven a sounding knock at the door startled him from his uneasy slumbers.

"It's that beggar Mulcahy; dear, oh dear! who the mischief wants him this hour of the night?" And with a cross, sulky face he proceeded to push back his couch and relight the gas. But when the door opened and Hogan's face appeared, Mr. Dicky's humour changed, and he advanced to meet him, hiding his surprise under the heartiness of the greeting.

"Good-evening, Dick," said the barrister;

"how are you, my boy? I called to ask your father about letting you go down with me to-morrow morning to Peatstown to help me with my canvass, as you have friends there. Hey? what do you say to it? Will your father allow you?"

"I'm sure he will; he is out now, and won't be in till late: but wait,—I'll call Nellie down."

Dicky went up to his mother's room, and beckoned Nellie out. She came out on the landing with her book held open in her hand, and looked interrogatively at him.

"Come downstairs—quick," said he; "Mr. Hogan has come about that business I told you of to-day."

"What! the election?"

"Come along," he whispered impatiently; "he wants me to go down by the midday mail to-morrow."

"Wait an instant, Dicky, please," said she; and running into her own room, she washed her hands and smoothed her hair. No adornment did she permit herself: some sort of proud instinct forbade that. Then she hurried down after the impatient Dicky, and with a heightened colour, due partly to her haste and

astonishment, partly to consciousness (it is certain that Mr. Hogan ascribed it entirely to the last), entered the room.

"How do you do, Mr. Hogan?" she said, advancing to meet him. "I am sorry papa is out."

"I am sorry too," he said; "but after all, you can let me know his decision to-morrow morning. Dicky, of course, has told you everything about my intention. He would be very useful to me; and my friend Ignatius Muldoon is also to be sub-sheriff; however, the writ is not out yet, and until it is and business has really begun, he does not appear on the scene. I wish you would allow Dicky to come down and canvass with me; he would be invaluable, knowing the place as he does."

"I am sure papa can't make any objection. You go down to-morrow?"

"Yes; to-morrow, by the midday train from the Kingsbridge."

"We must telegraph to the Sheas in the morning, Dick: you must, at all events, for I don't know them."

Nellie seated herself, as she spoke, by the

fireside, opposite to a large easy-chair which Dicky had advanced for Hogan. She looked exquisitely pretty; the firelight played on her soft brown hair, and lighted up her clear, fine skin and eyes. She looked so fresh, so rosy, and so young: childish, almost, as compared with Miss Bursford, to whom Hogan (alas!) had paid a third visit that very afternoon. Miss Diana had also sat by the fire with him; that is, she had reclined in the most graceful manner in a velvet-covered low chair, and instead of allowing the flickering blaze of the coals to light up the hollows of her face, had discreetly shaded it with a handscreen, used in the most airy, coquettish manner, and from beneath the shadow of which she had darted languishing glances now and again; and when he spoke of himself, as our hero was slightly addicted to doing, she would lean her chin in the palm of her hand, and, stooping forward, concentrate her attention on every syllable he uttered. It was very pleasant, very flattering; but there "was something more exquisite still" now, in watching, as he was doing, the colour come and go, the eyes dilate and half-close with

every word, and the unconscious simplicity and naturalness of Nellie.

They begged Hogan to stay for tea; and he, nothing loth, although he had promised to see the Bishop that evening, remained. Then Dicky opened a door leading into the drawing-room, and lighted up a round three-windowed room, on the ground-floor like the parlour, and looking out on the garden. There was no fire; but the warmth from the sitting-room penetrated it. Here was the piano; and Dicky, who could play pretty well, sat down and dashed into a spirited waltz. Nellie seated herself on an ottoman in the centre of the room; and Hogan, taking an album off a table, placed himself close to her, and began to turn over the leaves. Of course she had to look at each as it presented itself; and Dicky, glancing round, might, had he been so disposed, have made the discovery of the exact number of shades of difference between the golden-brown of his sister's and the black-brown of the barrister's hair,—the two heads being in the precise position needful for such observation. As for their conversation, it consisted of nothings, vain repetitions of already

answered questions, opinions and judgments flattering and otherwise.

"I hope Dicky will be of use to you," said Miss Nellie. "I am glad he is going; then we shall know early how matters are progressing for you."

"Yes, yes," he answered. "I shall tell you that myself." And then, taking the half of the great photographic book that she was holding, he closed it, and stooping a little nearer, looked straight, with his keen grey eyes, now softened with an unwonted tenderness, into hers, and said in a low tone and quickly, for Dicky was crashing the *finale* of his waltz, "May I come and tell you my success?"

She could not trust herself to answer, but her eyes spoke for her; she glanced, half involuntarily, upwards, and then rose and went over to the piano. Dicky made her play a soft Schubert melody, that seemed like a pleasant dream after his wild, chaotic, though rhythmic, dance.

She was a little distant with Hogan for the rest of his stay, which shortly ended. She felt frightened more than anything else, at present,

and confused with a strange new sense as yet unknown to her. On his side, he feared to have acted on the impulse of the moment, and tried to conjure up a new meaning for the startled though not displeased look in her eyes as she rose. They bade each other good-night ceremoniously. Hogan did not venture to press her hand when parting; but when down at the entrance-gates—whither Dicky, chattering like a pie, convoyed him—he turned and saw the dark tall figure in the doorway, the light on her graceful head, as she stood waiting to see him out of the gate and call her brother in, he looked admiringly, and waved his hand to her. A frank, pleasant laugh answered him; and, reassured, the young man went his way to town.

CHAPTER VI.

"SIC.—How now, my masters, have you chose this man?
1st CIT.—He has our voices, Sir.
BRU.—We pray the Gods he may deserve your loves."
—*Coriolanus.*

"Behold, these are the tribunes of the people.
The tongues of the commonwealth. I do despise them!
For they do prank them in authority
Against all noble sufferance."—*Idem.*

O'ROONEY HOGAN and Dicky started by the mail from the Kingsbridge terminus for Peatstown, a thriving market town and borough in one of the southern counties. The route lay through a dreary, uninteresting line of country, —flat and monotonous when once the Dublin mountains were left behind. And though the day was dry, a cold fog bounded the view from the windows.

Our two travellers talked and smoked for a fair portion of the time; but at last Hogan drew a sheaf of papers out of his travelling-bag, and Dicky was obliged to con-

tent himself with a newspaper. Late in the afternoon they came to a junction. The mail train, having kicked off a couple of carriages, proceeded snorting and shrieking on its way to meet the American steamer at Queenstown, and the barrister and his companion got out to walk up and down for ten minutes; then, after a short delay, the Peatstown train was announced, and scrambling in they found themselves advancing at a much slower pace along a cross line, bounded on each side by the bog.

The winter day was fast closing in now. A tawny hue in the sky over the tops of a pine wood to the right showed where the sun was vanishing; a blue vapour rose from the dark pools where the peats had been cut; and here and there a tree, stunted and naked, held out bare skeleton-like limbs. Dicky opened the window a moment, and looked out, seeking some familiar landmark by which to guess the distance. But the cold mist and the still, lonely country outside were not inviting, so he shut it again, and stretched himself on the seat, well wrapped up, to try and doze. Hogan was not inclined to talk; he leaned his elbow on the cushioned arm of his

seat, and mused for more than an hour in silence. In truth, now that he was away from Dublin, and that the lively, sanguine Saltasche was no longer at his elbow to goad him onward with his banter and encouragement, he felt a sort of reaction. Even the Bishop's half-hearted counsel and timid dissuasion, nerving him by its very bonelessness to more braced determination, now would have acted as a stimulant. He felt chilled and dull, and longed to reach their station, to get out and stamp life and warmth into his feet. Not a light could he see from the window. The sunset tints were gone, and blackness fell imperceptibly and swiftly over everything.

At last they slackened speed at a station not much larger than a cattle-shed; and Dicky, who had fallen asleep in his rugs, woke up, and almost jumped out, with sheer impatience. Before the train had stopped he was out on the platform in the midst of a group of frieze-coated men, and was shaking hands and exchanging noisy, hearty greetings with them. A rush was made in a moment up to the carriage, out of which Hogan and a porter

were, by this time, pulling the rugs and bags.

"Mr. Shea, Mr. Hogan; Mr. Barney Shane, Mr. Hogan. This is Mr. Killeen: Mr. O'Rooney Hogan."

These and some more introductions were gone through by Mr. Dicky in such a hasty way that Hogan could not connect the names with the right individuals of the group of big men, all of whom grasped his hand and wrung it till the bones almost cracked. Mr. Killeen was the editor of the *Peatstown Torch*, and a very important personage; joining to his literary avocation the functions of weighmaster and butter-taster on fair days. The little crowd picked their way with difficulty out of the station, which was only lighted by a couple of flickering oil-lamps. Behind stood in readiness an outside car with a fine blood-horse in the shafts. Dicky and his cousin Shea mounted on the driving side, Hogan and Killeen on the other; the rest of the party brought their own conveyances. Then the man, having turned the horse carefully, sprang out of its way, and off they started at a tearing rate.

"Yer soul, Dicky," cried Shea, heartily, "but I'm glad to see you; the girls will all go mad with delight; we never thought of you till the holidays. You did well to send the telegram."

"You have a splendid horse, Mr. Shea," said Hogan, who was admiring the paces of the animal.

"He is. I sold him this morning to Lord Kilboggan's steward for ninety guineas; bred him myself. So I must be careful of him," returned Shea, who was looking out cautiously ahead. "We've five miles to go—four and a half to the town, and a half a mile beyond it to Mulla Castle."

"Mulla Castle!" Hogan smiled at the promising title. "Is the railway four and a half miles away from the town?"

"It is, indeed; and a cruel loss it is to us, dragging to it up hill and down dale as we have to. When these railways were made they paid small heed to the convenience of the people along the lines."

"Augh!" said Killeen, "Home Rule will settle everything for us; won't it, Mr. Hogan?"

Hogan and Dicky both laughed heartily.

Meantime the car dashed on fast, splashing through water and over stones without ever slackening. No sign of light showed as yet, and not a sound, save the distant bark of a cur dog, or the ghostly rustle of the bare branches overhead, broke the stillness around them.

"Look out before you, sir," cried Killeen; "there's the river!"

The horse slacked an instant in a "soft" spot—a perfect bed of mud and water at the foot of a rise in the road; and listening, Hogan could hear the swift running murmur of the stream behind the tall sedges that hid it from his sight. On a level almost with the top of the bank, and far below that of the road, he could now trace a row of wretched cabins. A faint gleam of light in one or two showed that the inmates had not all as yet gone to bed. But most of them were black and silent.

"Are they empty, then?" asked Hogan. "What wretched damp holes they must be!"

"Damp!" cried Killeen. "Wait, sir, till to-morrow. They are mere ruins. And instead of repairing them he's paying the people to come out of them till he pulls them down."

"Best thing to do with them indeed," said Hogan.

"No, sir," said Killeen; "it is not. The poorest dog-hole is better for a man than the workhouse."

"The workhouse: why that? Are there no other cottages?"

"There are not; and Kilboggan won't build them. He has to pay rates on them, and he'd rather see every one in the poorhouse than that."

"There are now twelve hundred in that workhouse yonder," said Killeen, nodding in the direction where the building lay, though the darkness did not permit it to be seen. "And there are scores of able-bodied men, and their wives and families. We'll show you the cottages he has pulled down. The people that have cabins here are letting lodgings. Yes, begad, sir, in those places we passed they get sixpence a week to let a man lie on the floor with a cock of straw or hay under his head,—men that could pay rent for a house, too, but can't get one in the place."

By this time they had reached the town itself. A good long main street, with comfort-

able-looking shops on both sides, flagged pathways, and a tolerably well-kept thoroughfare. The hotel, a large yellow house with green jalousies, and a high flight of steps, on which were lounging a number of people, stood at the top of the street. The hall doors were open, and the light and brightness were inviting. The Kilboggan arms were painted over the door. At the first sound of the wheels a general rush was made. All down the street the people sprang to their doors, and a crowd of spectators thronged, curious and open-eyed, out of the bye-streets and lanes. Every one was on the alert. But Shea whipped up his horse, and the sightseers were disappointed. As they passed the hotel, he stooped forward and called to a man,—

"Hurry them on, Jack. Father Corkran's above, and he waits for no one." He pointed backwards with his whip, indicating the other cars, which he had distanced by a long stretch.

Hogan pricked up his ears at the name; and Dicky, who heard and noted it too, turned to Shea with a laugh.

"Father Jim's to be in it, of course? I

bet you we'll fight. Will Father Desmond be down?"

"Aye," replied Ned Shea, "and three or four more as well; just wait till you see. Be easy now, Dicky, with your tongue," he added, "and don't set 'Jim' against——" and he jerked his head backward, indicating the candidate behind them.

They now reached a low swing-gate, painted white. A couple of men sprang, apparently out of the ditch, to open and hold it. They passed through, and on to what was like another road, only narrower than that which they had left, and running through a field. After a minute or two they turned a corner, and a huge square white house, well lighted up, stood at the top of a wide field before them. A little white railing ran on each side of the grass as they approached, and marked off the sweep before the door. As soon as the sound of the car was heard in the house, the hall door was thrown wide open, letting out a stream of light and noise, and mingled odours of all sorts, the basis of which was turf smoke; and a crowd rushed out to welcome the visitors. A half-dozen or more daughters,

some grown up and others as yet in the chrysalis stage, seized on Dicky. Then they all bustled in; and in the hall, where was burning a huge fire of peats, Hogan was introduced to his hostess, a comely matron, with an amiable, good-humoured face,—a Kerry woman, as evidenced by her accent, and with the fine dark eyes and hair so often seen in that favoured district. Hogan and Dicky now followed a barefooted girl up to their rooms, which blazing turf fires made agreeable and home-like after the chilly journey. Hogan made a speedy toilet, and had sat down to warm his feet, when Dicky appeared at the door of communication, operating on his head with a pair of hair-brushes all the while.

"Are you hungry, Mr. Hogan?" asked he.

"Well, yes."

"A good job: wait till you see the dinner you've to go through. Camacho's wedding feast was a fly to it. Hurry, and let's go down to the drawing-room."

"Drawing-room!" echoed Hogan, staring at him.

"Yes, drawing-room; and as good a piano

as ever you heard, too. Bless you, man! do you know what Shea is worth?"

"Indeed I don't," said the barrister, who was asking himself whether he ought not to have brought down a dress suit.

"His parish priest told me, one time I was here, that he had every copper of eighty thousand—value for it, you know."

"God bless me!" said Hogan.

Then they went down to the drawing-room—a huge square room occupying the best part of the second floor. It was comfortably furnished, with plenty of stout rosewood and velvet chairs and sofas. A couple of round tables covered with red cloths, and on which were candles not yet lighted, had a business-like air. The piano was well piled with music; and vases of paper and wax flowers, and those wool-work performances which indicate the presence of convent-bred young ladies just as surely as anything can be indicated in this world.

Mrs. Shea, gorgeous in a green silk gown, invited Hogan to a seat beside her, after presenting to him in their various order about a dozen ladies, old and young, daughters,

aunts, and cousins of the house—all jolly; and the young ones good-looking and clear-skinned damsels fresh from the convents, and on their promotion. A couple of priests were present: a Father Desmond from the mountains, who seemed with Dicky to absorb the attention of the ladies; and a heavy, but good-humoured looking curate belonging to Peatstown. The great man, the parish priest himself, had not yet come in. In a minute Shea, now dressed in his Sunday frock-coat, which showed his wiry, active figure to advantage, stormed into the room. He was a good-looking man, sunburnt and healthy, with merry blue eyes, and hair clustering in little curls over a white forehead, that contrasted strangely with the tanned cheeks below it. With him came all the stragglers: Barney Shane, a cousin, a gigantic, wild-looking fellow in a shooting costume of grey tweed; Killeen the editor, oily and meek of manner; three or four wealthy farmers, big and rough and healthy-looking; and in the midst of the throng the redoubtable Father Jim Corkran himself.

Mrs. Shea rose and presented Hogan to

his reverence. Her manner in doing so struck the keen-eyed barrister as being somewhat peculiar; there was a faint shade of trepidation in the tones of her voice, and she seemed to look with a sort of nervous deprecation at the domineering face of the priest, as if fearful of finding there some displeasure or disapprobation. Father Corkran bowed, muttering some half unintelligible words of greeting as he did so. Hogan was standing on the hearthrug, having deliberately chosen that position for the expected encounter; and while smiling blandly in return to his reverence's remarks, was mentally taking observations, and making up his mind to face the situation boldly. Mrs. Shea's manner had given him unconsciously a valuable hint. The key of the position, her husband, must be secured at once, and pledged irredeemably to his side. So while talking all round with the off-hand, good-humoured way so peculiarly his own, he ran his eye over the person of his adversary,—for such, he felt convinced, was the *rôle* to be played by the parish priest.

A lubberly, coarse figure, bullet-headed, and with the prominent round forehead that tells of

obstinacy and impetuosity, wiry black hair and brows which contrasted strangely with round light blue eyes, hard and ruthless, and with a fixed staring look most unpleasant to encounter, while the lips were scornful, and pursed out with pride and self-sufficiency. And with all this he was utterly devoid of dignity, either of manner or bearing. Those who feared him—and they were many—were servile and cringing before the bully; but those who, like Shea and the richer class of farmers, were independent of his good graces, spoke of him, irrespective of course of his saintly office, with a freedom which showed that the reverend Father Jim was valued at his proper rate by them. Dicky, being an outsider and independent, used to have wordy tilts with his reverence, in which the youth seldom came off second best; his cousin Shea, who had some private grudges against his parish priest, used to put Dicky up to many a sharp saying and innuendo that he dared not employ himself; and a bout between the two was a favourite after-dinner diversion at Mulla Castle.

Dicky, who had been hidden on an ottoman among a crowd of admiring girls, spied

his old enemy on the sofa, and jumping up, advanced with a show of the greatest cordiality and affection to greet his reverence.

"Father Corkran—my dear sir!—and I not to have seen you till this minute!"

Father Corkran stretched out a grudging paw. "Well, little divelskin, so you're here again, are you?"

"Little!" repeated the youth. "By Jove, if I was as broad as I'm long I'd just fit your clothes—no more."

Before his reverence could think of a suitable retort, the dinner was announced, and Mrs. Shea demanded his attentions; the pair headed the way,—the rest streamed after. Hogan took in Miss Shea, and Dicky seized a couple of willing damsels, who squeezed and giggled downstairs abreast. A good number of the women of the party remained upstairs, as the dinner-table only accommodated twenty; and far more men than women sat down. A curt grace was pronounced by Father Corkran; and then, as Shea graphically described it, they "saw their dinner." Hogan looked round him in undisguised wonder and amusement. At the head of the table, before Mrs. Shea, was a boiled

turkey as big as a sheep; at the foot an entire sirloin, perhaps forty pounds in weight, of beef. A boiled leg of mutton and turnips claimed Hogan's attention. Two dishes of fowls, a roast saddle of mutton, a boiled round of beef, a monstrous ham and a roast turkey, a meat pie and a chicken pie, occupied places before the gentlemen of the party. Vegetables were handed round by red-cheeked smiling servant-girls; and beer-jugs, sherry decanters, and magnums of good champagne were in constant request to wash down the solids.

"What a superb turkey, Mrs. Shea!" said Hogan: "is that one of your own rearing, may I ask?"

"It is, Mr. Hogan," replied the lady, who was carving with a skill and dexterity that evinced long practice.

"It must have taken a railway train to *draw* that fellow."

This somewhat technical joke was welcomed by the hostess with a hearty laugh; but on the rest of the audience it fell flat. Father Corkran, who sat opposite, grunted a note of approval, but never raised his head from his plate or

relaxed his operations, the intensity and fervour of which brought beads of perspiration out on his bald head. It was not the time for *jeux d'esprit*, as the barrister acknowledged when he looked round the table and noted the curious comportment of the guests, all solemnly engaged in the grand event of the day. "If they take in solids in this way," he thought, "what will they stop at when it comes to the whiskey and hot water?" So he wisely determined to lay a substantial foundation by way of precaution. After about twenty minutes, Father Jim Corkran, who having been first on the road was the first to declare a halt, laying down his knife and fork, threw himself back in the chair and employed an interlude, or rather an armistice, of about five minutes in staring at Hogan. He then resumed his avocations, but with somewhat less assiduity; and in a minute or two conversation became general. In deference to the ladies' presence the company eschewed politics, and local affairs were discussed until the end of the second course. Then came a formidable array of glasses, hot-water kettles and whiskey decanters. Each man brewed for himself; and in a

moment or two the foundation stone of every real Irish political discussion was laid: every disputant was provided with a tumbler of whiskey punch. O'Rooney Hogan filled his own glass with a mixture as weak as he dared to brew it, and instinctively girt up his loins for battle.

The moment was come. Ned Shea leaned forward in his chair, and looked all round the room. A silence unbroken, save for the clinking of busy ladles, reigned immediately amongst the guests.

"Your reverences and ladies and gentlemen, —this is my friend from Dublin, Mr. O'Rooney Hogan, and I'm right glad to see him amongst us. I hope you will all join me in drinking his health and success to his cause."

"Hear, hear!" went round the table heartily; and all—the ladies, who were each provided with a wine-glass of steaming toddy, included—drank to the toast. Hogan got up and bowed; and then, a little nervously, he made a short speech, expressing his thanks for his host's kindness, and concluded with a flowery compliment to his fair hearers.

After this, which was only the introduction,

the ladies trooped off upstairs, and the real business began. Barney Shane, the stalwart tenant-farmer and cousin to the host, proposed in a stentorian voice the toast, "Success to the Cause!" This was barely drunk when the parish priest, who was now in fine fighting trim, planted one sturdy elbow on the table, and spoke in a loud grating voice,—

"I'd like to know, Barney Shane, and Ned Shea too, and Mr. O'Rooney Hogan,—I say, I'd like to know what's the cause Mr. Hogan, no offence to him, has adopted?"—and he banged his great hand on the table, and flung himself back in his seat awaiting his reply.

The glove was thrown. Shea and his guests turned to Hogan with expectant eyes, solemn and inquiring; and feeling that the hour of trial was come, our hero jumped to his feet.

"Gentlemen," said he, "I am now called upon publicly to state with what political views I have presented myself to the voters of Peatstown. When I proposed to myself the honour of representing you in Parliament, I was fully aware of the magnitude and importance of the great questions now agitating this

Empire; and were I to hesitate in declaring my principles concerning them for one moment, I should feel myself deserving of your heartiest condemnation. I will therefore proceed to read to you my Parliamentary programme embodied in this." He held a strip of blue paper in his hand. "I may remark that this address will appear in all the Dublin papers to-morrow; and Mr. Muldoon, my agent, will settle with Mr. Killeen for the printing and distribution of the same throughout the country to-morrow."

Mr. Killeen's countenance now took a pleasant expression: he had been sorely vexed as to whether the printing of the election papers was to be confided to him or not.

"Come on to the address," interpolated the impatient Father Jim.

"Certainly, Father Corkran," was the bland reply; and unrolling the strip of blue paper, Hogan cleared his throat, and in a fine full voice began as follows:—

"GENTLEMEN,—The duty devolves upon you now, owing to the death of your late lamented representative, Mr. Theodore Wyldoates" (a scornful laugh from Barney Shane made itself

heard at this point), "of electing a representative in his place. Never before did the task carry with it a greater responsibility.

"You are now called upon to determine whether the nationality of our country is slowly but surely to be crushed, or whether, the dark cloud of oppression having been lifted off, the glorious sunshine of freedom and emancipation is to be substituted, never more to be eclipsed. At this critical moment I offer you my services, and seek the honour of being your representative. In me you will find the most staunch of all the supporters of the principles of Home Rule. I will devote my energies and talents, such as I possess, to obtain for Ireland the most complete powers of self-government.

"I heartily concur (here he raised his voice perceptibly) in the views upon the Education Question entertained by the prelates and clergy of my Church. In me they will have a sincere and energetic supporter.

"On behalf of the Tenant Farmers, I hold and maintain that complete Fixity of Tenure at a fair rent is not only the inalienable natural right of the tiller of the soil, but is for the mutual benefit of owner and occupier.

"I hold it to be the duty of every Catholic to sustain our Holy Father the Pope against a most unjust spoliation; and if you return me as your representative, my voice shall not be silent in his behalf.

"It is unnecessary for me to state that a full and complete amnesty should be granted to all political prisoners.

"I ask you, in conclusion, to entrust me with the duty, as your representative, of endeavouring to carry into effect these principles —sanctioned as they will be, I hope, by your votes. If entrusted with your confidence, I pledge myself to accept neither office nor favour, and to devote my best energies to the welfare and prosperity of our country.

"Gentlemen electors,

"I have the honour to be

"Your faithful servant,

"JOHN O'ROONEY HOGAN."

The applause was a little flat, although unanimous; and Hogan felt it. He repented having read the address,—a speech is so much better appreciated always. He handed the blue paper across to Killeen; and clearing

his throat afresh, began to speak, determined to regain the ground he felt he had lost.

"Gentlemen, you have now my programme; and to-morrow, by Mr. Killeen's kind agency, it will be in the hands of every one in the town and district. I have placed the portions of the programme in the order in which it seems to me they ought to come. First of all, Home Rule, the grand object for which every true Irishman is striving; then Education, pure and untainted by heresy and infidelity. Until we have the grand aim secured, never" (and here he raised his voice louder), "never will the ground-down peasants, the plundered farmers, the Sainted Martyr, or the poor caged prisoners, have their rights,—never, till Ireland be once more a nation!"

A roar of enthusiasm greeted this peroration; the table was thumped by the excited listeners until the glasses rang again. When the tumult had a little subsided, so that his strident voice could be heard, the parish priest leaned across the table, and fixing Hogan with his hard blue eyes, in which sparks of anger now shone, began,—

"I see, sir, how it is with you: Home

Rule is the horse you want to ride in on —eh?"

"Never mind, Father Jim," put in Dicky, in whose brain champagne and whiskey punch were beginning to hold divided sway; "what horses are you talking of now? If every man rode his own horse, you'd walk oftener than you do."

"Well done, Dicky! Yer soul, Dicky, ye had him then. Bravo the Dublin boy! More power!" roared the company, in high delight at the allusion to a well-known jockeying trick played by his reverence. Father Jim laughed too: he could well afford it.

"Go on up to the ladies, ye jackeen!" he roared back; "where are ye prating here? Go on, I bid ye!"

"Catch me!" retorted the boy with a grimace.

Father Corkran returned to his charge with the candidate.

"I was talking to the Bishop," he began in the pompous high voice people will assume when they mention their superiors, "the other day; and his lordship told me he doesn't understand this new go at all, at all. What's

to come of it? and what do ye want, and what will ye do with it when ye have it? Peace and quietness, and every man look after his own: there's me ideas, and there's the Bishop's."

"You, and the likes of you," broke in Barney Shane, in a truculent voice, "that have nothing to lose, may prate of your peace and quietness, and every man look after his own. We'll look after our own,—and trust you to look after yours." Here an assenting shout almost rent the ceiling. "Look at me," he went on, smiting the table with a fist like Thor's; "my lease will be out in two years' time, and what will that gambling blackguard Kilboggan give me? The key of the street! and I born and reared in the place, and my father and grandfathers before me;" and the big man's voice almost faltered as he spoke.

"Aye, and what will Home Rule do for that?" sneered the priest.

"I'll try," was the concise answer. "Ye have two years before ye," added he, turning to Hogan; "an' if it doesn't——" He finished the sentence by the significant act of spitting in the palm of his hand.

"Right, my friend," cried Hogan; "'Heaven helps those who help themselves.'" This man could bring twenty voters or more, perhaps, with him; and Hogan felt his cause was winning. All this time the punch was being consumed fast and steadily. Ned Shea, the host, drained his fifth tumbler, and running one hand through his fine curly hair, he stretched out the other to Hogan.

"I have a lease for a couple of hundred years," said he; "but ye have my support, sir, all the same. And there's success to ye again, Mr. Hogan!" and he filled out a bumper of raw whiskey and tossed it off.

"And mine! and mine!" ran round the table, as the guests followed his example.

The priests at the table said but little, except the curate of the mountain parish, who drank every toast and sentiment with the rest. Father Corkran, who was vicar-general of the diocese, had been to see the Bishop the day before; and none of them knew as yet what course was to be taken with regard to the election, and especially with regard to the new party cry Home Rule, so they were careful not to commit themselves in any way.

As Ned Shea's guests, they were bound to respect his friend; but they knew that Hogan was a loose fish of a Dublin barrister, who, of course, was doing the best he could for himself; and it rested with the Bishop as yet whether they were to support him or not. They all, too, had a pretty shrewd idea that the vicar-general had written or telegraphed to Nice, to the lord of the manor, for instructions as to whether there would be an opposition or not, and also concerning some other minor matters, important to clerical interests. The Kilboggans had a stake in the county—a vested interest,—and as well as Tories and bigots, they were aristocrats; and aristocracy, and all pertaining thereto, is dear to the clerical heart. And naturally:—are there not orders and degrees of aristocracy in the Church—cardinals, archbishops, bishops, parish priests, and curates? Father Corkran looked forward to being a bishop one day; and every curate has his eye on a fat parish. And though priests and people owed everything to the Whigs, in fundamental principles and in reality the first-named are far more adapted to Toryism. Home Rule had begun, some-

how, too independently of the priests. The Protestants were entirely too much mixed up with it to please them. It seemed so unnatural, and so opposed to all precedent, to see Tories, Protestants, and gentlemen working hand in hand with the Catholic nationalists: it couldn't be sound socially or politically. And now the Ultra party, the dregs of Fenianism, and those vile returned Americans, who of late swarmed everywhere, with their republican and democratic notions, were collecting themselves together under the name of Home Rulers. Altogether, most of the clergy looked with distrust and disfavour on the movement—as yet, at all events—for they were careful not to commit themselves one way or the other.

Father Corkran sat sulky and silent, brooding over the turn events had taken. It was perfectly clear that every man in the room was going to follow this adventurer to the poll. In fact, the fellow himself was so sure of his success that he was taking a cool, independent tone in speaking to him—Father Corkran, the administrator! And the Education Question, forsooth, was to be laid aside

till Home Rule and Fixity of Tenure was got. It was a new experience indeed; and what a pass things must have come to, when a candidate might "cheek" the parish priest! No doubt he felt safe, with this new dodge the Ballot at his back. However, beyond a sulkiness in no way unusual or remarkable, his reverence showed no overt hostility. He dared not, indeed, tell the voters his own opinion of Home Rule: would that he could! The "cloth" had always been national; and the country having made Home Rule a national cry, the priests could not disown it completely,—at least not yet, for the trump might change, and pledges are awkward things. The best thing was to play out the present hand as skilfully as possible.

Ned Shea rose now, in obedience to a summons from above stairs, and his guests followed him up to tea. The piano was open, and Mr. Dicky was seized upon by the young ladies to play. However, Mr. Dicky had something better in view; and when tea had disappeared, seeing that Shea, Father Corkran and Hogan, with Barney Shane and a farmer named Hara, had seated themselves at one

of the card-tables, he determined to follow their example, and speedily organized a game of "spoil five" with a couple of priests and Mrs. Shea. One of the daughters seated herself beside Dicky; and a mountain of coppers having been produced, they speedily set to work. At the other table a far more serious business was being done. Unlimited loo was proposed, and a shilling was placed by each in the pool to begin.

"Looed for the amount now, and the rigour of the game!" declared his reverence, who loved a "hand of cards."

He was the first to infringe his own law.

Shea dealt; and turning to Father Jim, who was on his left, he asked the formal question "Will you play?"

Father Jim inspected his three cards, and answering in the negative, dashed them into the middle of the table.

"You are looed, sir," said Hogan politely.

"No, I'm not," was the gracious reply.

"You are looed," cried Barney in delight. "You threw out before the time; and it was yourself made the rule for the strict game."

"Pay down five shillings here this minute;

pay down your money, and look pleasant over it,—come on;"and Shea held out the saucer in which the five shillings were.

There was no help for it; and glaring savagely at them, Father Jim gathered up the five shillings, leaving a half-sovereign instead. Hogan won the whole pool; so his reverence was consoled on seeing twenty shillings put down by the others. The stakes soon reached such a height that they proposed to limit the pool to two pounds ten, or in other words, the loo to ten shillings. It was anything but a quiet game: the eagerness of the priest, and the ferocity of Barney Shane, who glared at the others as if they were in a league to cheat him, and was far more watchful that they did not gain an unfair advantage than careful to play his own cards so as to win, were openly displayed. Hara was tricky, and on him Barney and Father Corkran concentrated their attention. Shea himself, too lazy and good-humoured to care whether he won or lost, adjured the rest to take things easy. Hogan was too much a man of the world to show much feeling one way or the other; he had intended to lose

twenty pounds to Father Jim, but as things were going, he thought he might as well win as lose. The pool was a full one when the deal came again to Father Corkran; and the whole sum fell to his reverence's lot. Seizing the saucer, he emptied it on the table with a clatter that raised the ire of Barney Shane.

"It's easy seen," said he bitterly, "ye took care of yourself. Oh, begad, yes, I don't like to see the dealer walking off with everything that way."

"Don't ye, be me sowl!" was the scornful notice his reverence vouchsafed.

So they went on for an hour; until at last Father Desmond took Shea's place, to let him sing one of Moore's Melodies to his daughter's accompaniment on the piano. Hogan had lost ten pounds—most of which had gone into his reverence's pocket. After a few more rounds, Hogan called Dicky over to his place. Dicky, who guessed that high play was going on, from the loud, excited talk that had reached him, obeyed gladly. The girls wanted him to come and dance; but he refused, and they were left to the clumsy attentions of a couple of young farmers. They scarcely looked

at Hogan, and answered him coldly when he addressed them; with the fine instinct of their sex they divined him, and estimated his worth pretty accurately. "Leave him where he is, Mary," said one shrewd damsel to another; "it's some grand Dublin lady, maybe a lord's daughter, he has his eye on; leave him where he is; he won't be much good to any one that gets him."

Then there was a rush to where Dicky was sitting—his high clear voice being heard in altercation with Father Jim.

"Have you any money—eh?" he asked of the priest, who was angry at his joining the set.

"Have I?" retorted he. "I've more than you ever saw, or ever will, my Dublin slieveen."

"Do you know how to play loo?" asked Dicky imperiously.

"Oh, faith, we'll try that; so here's at you, now!" said Father Corkran, thoroughly nettled and slapping down the cards with fiery emphasis.

The luck was even for a few turns, but changed suddenly; and Dicky won a couple of pounds in a breath. Another "hand" was played, and he again took the pool.

"Now, Father Jim, how do you like that, hey?" And he stood up, holding the money in his hand, as if to move off with his gains.

"Look at him!" cried Father Jim in pathetic tones, "Oh, look at him now—walking off with the poor priest's money."

A shout of laughter greeted this appeal.

"Ho! ho! how poor you are! You got it easy, and it's gone easy," railed the youngster.

"If you ever worked half as hard in your life, you little Dublin jackeen!" retorted his reverence.

"Worked! With the knife and fork, you mean, I suppose?"

"Yah! you slieveen, you jackeen." And then, with a funny change of tone, "Sure if I had any idea such a grand gentleman as yourself, Mr. Davoren," he continued, was comin' down to our poor little place, I was talkin' to the Bishop, then, and the O'Gorman Mulcahy, and sure I'd have asked them round to ait a bit ov dinner with ye, so I would."

"And if I'd any *ideeah*," mimicked Dicky, "Father Jim, that you were intimate with such grand people entirely, I'd—I'd—never have won your money."

This gibe finished the fragment of patience left to Father Jim.

"Come on out of that here, an' divel sweep you for an impident small crumb of humanity. Come on, and I'll play you double or quits."

Dicky, with a gambler's prescience, feeling himself in the vein of luck, threw down his money on the table. Barney Shane seized and counted it.

"Twelve pounds between Dicky and Father Jim!" shouted he.

A rush was made from all parts; and facing each other, the opponents began.

"Two games out of three," said his reverence, "and cut for the deal."

Dicky's luck continued; he won the twelve pounds, to the delight of the room; and Father Corkran went off home declaring the youth's company to be neither sound nor saintly. After ten o'clock all the clerical party left. Shea caught the curate Desmond by the coat as he was going out of the room.

"Mr. Hogan and I will be in Ballinagad tomorrow in the afternoon. I think we'll sleep at Barney's."

"Come to me for dinner. I say, Shea," (he

dropped his voice to a whisper,) "it won't be a walk-over. One of the nephews will be over at the end of the week."

"Sure! By gad, the rogues have stolen a march on us!"

"I won't say for certain; but there's something. Don't let on I told you, Ned, for any sake."

Dancing began, now that the restraint of the priest's presence was removed; and it was late when our two travellers retired, with weary limbs and aching heads, to their much-needed repose.

CHAPTER VII.

Jean Paul Richter says:—"No man really believes his creed until he can afford to laugh at it."

NEXT morning, after a late breakfast, Hogan and his host sallied out and visited the farm and out-offices. The house did not show to much better advantage in the daylight. The plaster was rain-soaked, and in many places had fallen off altogether. There was no garden, although a fine southern slope at the left side of the house might easily have formed one. The farmyard was unpaved, and the animals stood half-leg deep in pools of stagnant water and stable muck. The outhouses were new, and consequently in fair order, although the internal arrangements were so dirty and slovenly as to offend every sense. Wasteful, disorderly plenty seemed the reigning characteristic. Not so much as a rose-bush or creeper against the walls spoke of

the taste of the piano-playing ladies within, and the dairy, to judge by the smell which saluted Hogan's nostrils as he put his head in, was equally in need of a supervising eye.

Shea, having shown his fine cattle and horses, desired that the car should be got ready and brought round to the front door; and in a short time they started to visit the town.

Peatstown, taking its name from the bog on the skirt of which it is built, lay in a hollow. There was a good main street, and a number of smaller ones branching off it; but the greater portion consisted of rows of miserable cabins, which, from their position and sunken state, must be often almost under water. The people were wretchedly poor, and the rags of the beggars, with whom of course the place was swarming, were a perfect marvel in point of variety of colour and texture. Shea drove straight to Killeen's place of business, and alighting, penetrated with Hogan into the editorial sanctum. There they found the presiding genius of the *Peatstown Torch* smoking a short pipe and gossiping with a

couple of worthies of the town. These were presented to Hogan in due form, and, after a short conversation, in obedience to a hint from Shea, left the editor with his new visitors.

"Father Corkran was in a while ago. It's well you had me engaged on your side, Mr. Hogan," began Mr. Killeen.

"What! there *is* to be a contest then; I thought all along it was a false report," cried the barrister.

"A telegram from Nice this morning, upon my honour. Mr. Theo. Wyldoats, him that's *attaché* at Constantinople, is on his way; bedad, you'll have a pull for it, sir."

"Oh ho! But there is no fear of him, Mr. Killeen; the family are very unpopular. Anyhow, Home Rule will carry it. You can't trust the Kilboggans, you know."

"Father Jim has got the grant of land for the chapel, whichever way it goes."

"He has, eh? has he?" said Hogan. "Well, if he be worth his salt he'll get what'll build him a chapel house too. Come now, Mr. Killeen, let us arrange our business, for I must be away to canvass."

Then some business matters were entered into in reference to the printing and placarding of posters and handbills. The charges for these astounded Hogan; but he was wise enough to settle nothing beforehand, and only stipulated that the figure should not exceed a certain sum. He expected Muldoon to arrive by the evening train, so they next went to the hotel to bargain for rooms for election purposes, and to see what use could be made of the ball-room at the hotel as a ballot office. Then Hogan started on a canvass among the shop-keepers. Few of them would promise anything, for fear of offending the priests. They made some allusions to the Ballot, however, which reassured the candidate. Shea indicated to him some houses into which it was useless to go, the inmates being employed by Kilboggan, or depending in some way upon the Castle. Agents were engaged and sent out to canvass; and Hogan, feeling that the farmers and outlying voters were the most important, and needed to be seen and talked to more than the townsmen, mounted the car and started towards Ballinagad, along by the river side.

The road was soft and dirty, and having been made in the old days when horse power was cheap and labour also, ran up hill and down dale with glorious indifference to the wear and tear of animal tissue. The vehicle was two-wheeled, as were all those they met; the reason of which became apparent when they reached the hilly ground. At the foot of every elevation lay a slough of mud, of various degrees of depth and consistency. No number of horses could have dragged a four-wheeled conveyance through it. The ditches at the sides of the road were full to overflowing; and watercress and other ditch-weeds grew over the footways. Gullies under the road led foaming streams to the river — already swollen and angry. Low-lying, marshy fields, over which hung a mantle of dark-grey fog, lay on both sides. The stunted hazels and alders, scarce rising above the level of the hedgerow, had every little twig hung with crystal-like pendants. A dismal, dreary country scene as man could behold, on a chill winter afternoon. It seemed almost a desert. Here and there, at long intervals, a cabin sunk below the road-level raised its brown indented

roof in a sheltered corner. The thin blue reek of turf-smoke seemed to rise almost on a level with the face, while the cackle of the hungry geese wandering homewards through the mud pools, alone broke the wide-reaching stillness. Seagulls rose sometimes out of a ploughed field as they passed, or a solitary heron or a curlew, uttering its melancholy shriek, flapped upwards from the river sedges. They crossed a bridge, and leaving the river behind, took an up-hill road lying for the most part through a wood. After emerging from this, they struck again on a broad high-road, and kept on at a swinging trot for nearly an hour.

"Eighteen miles altogether, Mr. Hogan," said Shea. "Yonder is Barney's house. We're into Ballinagad now."

They turned up a narrow muddy lane, and Hogan saw right before them a two-storied brick house, which looked very much the worse for time and weather. In front of the hall door, if the entrance deserved that appellation, was a huge pool of water; stepping-stones laid down in this showed that it was a permanent institution. Fowls of all sorts seemed as much at home in the house as in

the yard, which was indicated by a ruined wall running out beside it to the left.

Barney appeared now at the door, and after hallooing to a man to come and take the horse, welcomed the travellers to his mansion, and led the way in. Pointing to the holes in the floor of the entry, he warned Hogan against putting his foot inadvertently in them, and related with glee how MacScutch, the agent, had twisted his ankle the day that he came up to inspect the state of the place. He led the way into the one sitting-room of the house—which, indeed, looked a great deal more like the robbers' caves to be read of in romance than a sitting-room in the ordinary sense of the word. There was no grate; and a perfect stack of turf was blazing on the hearthstone. A rickety painted table and half a dozen old chairs, in a fearful state of dilapidation, composed the whole furniture, save a broken sofa, one end of which was supported in a hole which had been made in the wall of the room apparently for that especial purpose, and which seemed the chosen home of a brace of fine pointers and a clever-looking terrier—all three of which were curled up on

it. Daniel O'Connell, Robert Emmet in his memorable Hessian boots, and other worthies, graced the walls of the room. In every corner lay whips, saddles, bridles, and other implements of Barney's profession; for, although ostensibly a farmer, his sole occupation was horse-breeding.

This stalwart fellow had a dull, hoggish life enough; perched in such a weather-beaten eyrie all the year round. Unbroken in its sameness save when he started with some of his young stock for a horse fair or market, Barney's life was monotonous in the extreme. His profession was by no means an arduous one—it left rather too much idle time on his hands. He had no wife: the lease of his farm being almost run out, none of the match-makers around considered him worth their attention. Newspaper reading consumed most of his spare time. The *Enfranchiser* came down from Dublin daily; and he and a neighbour, a dairy farmer, subscribed for the *Daily Telegraph* between them. Every in and out of the Tichborne case was as familiar to Barney Shane as to any other newspaper student of the day, and filled up many a gap in

the otherwise scant budget of gossip. He followed the fortunes of the Carlists with unwavering interest, identifying that particular party in some blind way with the Catholics and nationalists, and looking upon the Republicans with disfavour, as aliens and heretics. On wet days—by no means rare in his mountain district—Barney would retire to bed with a sheaf of papers collected from all parts (he never heeded dates), and read all day till dinner-time. Dinner over, the pipe beguiled an hour; and then, having finished his dudheen, Barney would kick the dogs off his sofa and take a nap. He usually spent the evenings in some of the neighbouring farmhouses: or if disinclined to go out, would despatch one of the "runners" always hanging about his place to fetch a neighbour, or, last resource, the schoolmaster, to help to while away the long dull evenings.

Hogan seated himself by the fire, and looked round him with astonishment. The floor was bare, save for a plentiful covering of dirt, for it plainly had never been washed. The walls had at one time been whitened, but were now an indescribable dingy brown,—mud-

coloured, indeed, they looked to be by the light of the home-made tallow candles which graced the table. A red-haired barefooted girl brought in a clean though coarse cloth, which she spread; then a dish of ham, and three or four dozen fried eggs, tea, and bread and butter made their appearance; to all of which they did ample justice. Barney was hospitality itself, and forced the viands on his guests with right good will.

Ere the supper was half over, a horse's foot was heard without; and the little curate, Father Desmond, having alighted with no small diplomacy on a dry stone, and picked his way through the pitfalls of the entry, presented his jolly countenance at the door of the room.

"Ah! By the powers, boys, is it here I find ye? Ned Shea, sure ye promised to dine with me to-day, and Mauriade has lost her temper (aisy losin'—God help the finder) entirely waiting for ye. Have you the news? Of course ye have."

"Aye; Kilboggan's at his old thricks," said the master of the house; "come on over here and sit down, Father Dan."

"Where's Master Dicky?" asked Father Desmond, taking his seat. "Sure he ought to be with you, Mr. Hogan."

"I could not get him away from the ladies down there, the little villain. It's soothering my voters he ought to be, and not the pretty girls."

"They ought to make a counsellor out of that chap," said Barney. "The divil's own tongue he's got in his head. Nothin' kills me but the cheeky way he walks into 'Jim.'"

"Ah! bedad then, boys," said Father Desmond, "look out for Sunday, at last mass. 'Jim' is going to fire on ye. Kilboggan will give the right of turf-cutting and the chapel ground, and maybe a handful of money into the bargain. The son is worse than ever—no hope of him for six months; and Theodore, the nephew and heir, is to be got in for certain."

"What's this right of turf-cutting?" asked the barrister.

"Faith, like many a more, it is giving us back a present of what's our own," said Barney. "He stopped the turf-cutting to the people along Sandy's Lane; and they

always had it. I'll tell you who knows the history and the ins and outs of it,—Killeen."

Hogan made a note of the item, thinking he might make capital of it.

"He took in the far common," continued Barney, "that never was his at all; run a big wall round it, and dared any one trespass."

"What's his income now? This estate should be very valuable," asked Hogan of the priest.

"Thirty-five thousand a year out of this county, sir. Yes, and he doesn't spend as many pence in it. Neither here nor in Dublin does that man leave one penny of his money; and look at the state of the town. The people are literally bribed to go into the poorhouse. He wouldn't drive a nail to keep a cabin from falling about their ears. No; keep them down, and down with them."

"Look at that, Mr. Hogan," said Barney; "our money—yes, ours! the rents of the lands that ought to be ours—carried out of the country; and look at the place. The people are fading off the land. The shop-keepers below there are broke. There's less business doing through the country now than ever was.

It's the small people that are the support of the business people; and when they're not in it, who consumes?"

"To be sure," said Hogan. "He gives no employment of any sort, either, I suppose?"

"Divil a bit. Mary!" roared the host, "are you coming with that hot water and glasses? I can tell you, Mr. Hogan, when we get Home Rule we'll make a clean sweep of absentees."

"Do you propose to confiscate their estates, or to put on a tax?" asked the barrister, who was making his punch.

"Oh, a tax—a smart tax," said Ned Shea. "Mr. Hogan, what way is that you're making your punch? Ah! come on, now; a half-glass."

"A tax, wisha!" sneered Barney. "I'd tax him: strip him clean and bare, as he stripped many a one, and let the State take all his lands—the Protestant villain and swaddler!"

"Swaddler he is; no doubt of that," said Father Desmond.

"Well," replied Barney, "and look at Father Corkran, below there, maintaining a Protestant foreign tyrant against Mr. Hogan here."

"Yes, indeed: a priest sending a Protestant into Parliament—it is very strange," said the candidate. "What can we expect that Englishman to do for you,—if he were a Catholic, even?"

Hogan always insisted on displaying this special virtue when in presence of any of "the cloth."

"Bah! Catholic or not, English is enough," growled the host; "but for English Catholics, sure there'd be no Protestants at all."

"Right, Barney; and if English Catholics in the time of Elizabeth had done their duty to the Religion, the Spaniards would have triumphed and England would be Catholic to this day. Lord Howard and the rest of them were, what they always were, cringing to the sovereign—the earthly sovereign—and neglecting their spiritual Ruler, who had the first claim on them."

"Ah! come now, Mr. Hogan," said Ned Shea, "soldiers are bound to fight for their flag; I can't give in to that."

Father Desmond only laughed good-humouredly. He had some experience of electioneering talk in his day, and was in-

clined to take the candidate's professions with a grain of salt; he guessed very shrewdly that this ultra-religious zeal was put on for his especial benefit, and that if he were absent Church interests would be relegated to a secondary position in the discussion. Still, his was not a very high-pitched standard. Such as it was, Hogan, although he did not reach it, came as near doing so as any one else going; besides, he opposed Kilboggan, which was the recommendation. He took a slip of paper out of his pocket, and handed it to Hogan, saying,—

"I had to go round about the place to-day, Mr. Hogan, and those names are promised to you; and here are a few you would be as well to call on. Do you see? I am thinking, though, we should call a meeting down there in the school-house, and let them all come in—say on Friday night (this is Wednesday); then, Saturday night, have the meeting down below in Peatstown."

"I must be in town on Saturday," said Hogan. "Could you collect your men for to-morrow night and let me know?"

"I'll sent out a couple of gossoons across

the fields in the morning," said Shea. "Why not? Time's precious, and the writ is out already."

"I'll tell you who'll vote against Father Jim, anyhow," said Barney: "Hara's brother, Tom Hara of Beerstown."

"Bedad, he will," said Father Desmond.

"Why is that, pray, if one may ask?" said Hogan.

"Well," said Barney, nothing loth to tell the story, "one night at half-past ten Father Jim was going home from a dinner; and passing Hara's house, he saw a light in the windows. He was afraid there was some fun going on that he knew nothing about, so he ties up the horse to a rail and in with him into the house. Well, he brought the whip with him, and nothin' would serve but he hits Hara a crack of the whip, and, says he, 'What has you out of bed this hour of the night? Go 'long to bed, you vagabone, you.' Hara caught the whip from him, sir, and he bet him down the boreen till he broke it on his back. Devil a lie; and well done to him too!"

"Ah! but 'Jim' had it off him in the end," said Ned Shea. "When Hara's haggard

burned down that autumn, didn't 'Jim' say from the altar 'twas just the price of him for lifting a hand against the priest?"

"*Pishogues!*" returned his cousin scornfully, "sorrow a more."

"Well, I heard a good story from Father Tom McCollumby the other day," said Father Desmond.

"Tell us that, Father Dan; it's sure to be good."

Father Desmond cleared his voice, took a sip of toddy, and began in a dry solemn way,—

"A friend of his, a priest, was hearing confessions one Saturday, and a boy came to him and said he had a rale bad sin on his mind. 'Well, me good boy, come on wid it,' said his reverence: 'sure we all must be forgiven; so what is it now?' 'Augh den, your riverence, I do be always sayin', Be the Holy Father.' 'You do?—that's very bad, me boy. Now, how often do you be sayin' that? do you say it twiced a day?' 'Oh! begor, an' I do, an' more, your riverence.' 'Do you say it twenty times a day, me good boy?' 'Augh! begor, an' I do; an' more than forty times a day, your

riverence!' 'This is very bad indeed, me good boy. Go home, now,' said the priest, 'and get your sister to make you a bag, and hang it round your neck; and every time you say, Be the Holy Father, drop a little stone in it, and come here to me this day week.'

"Well, that day week his reverence was hearin' as usial in his box, and he heard an awful noise in the church, so he looked out ov the dure; and what does he see but his penitent, an' he draggin' a sack up the body ov the church! 'Tady Mulloy,' says he, 'what do ye mane be sich conduck as that in de church?' 'Shure, yer riverence,' says the fellow, 'dese is all the Be de Holy Fathers, an' de rest of um's outside in the dray.'"

"Well," said Ned Shea, when the laughter which greeted this anecdote had died away, "I think Father Corkran's story every bit as good."

"Come along with it, then; I haven't heard it," said his cousin Barney.

"There was a Kerry priest," began Ned Shea, "and he had the fashion of hearin' confessions wid a slate an' pencil; an' he'd write down every sin, an' the price of it opposite.

Well, one day a big mountainy fellow came to his duty, an', says he, 'I bruk a man's head last Hallow-eve.' 'That's ninepence,' says the priest. 'I cut the tail iv Larry Kelly's cow.' 'That's a shillin': oh, begob, a shillin' that is!' and down it went on the slate. 'I murthered me wife twice.' 'That's thruppence,—go on.' 'I kilt an Orangeman.' 'Whoo!'' says the priest, rubbin' out everything; 'that clanes out all the rest.'"

Much laughter greeted Ned Shea's contribution; and the evening wore on fast, amid stories and talk. Barney drank a fearful quantity of whiskey punch, related over and over again his pet grievance against Kilboggan, shook hands and vowed eternal friendship for and awful threats alternately against Hogan if Home Rule did not see him righted ere the two years' lease was out. At last they separated. Shea and Hogan were conducted to their beds in an upper room by the girl, and lost no time in bestowing themselves for the night.

A pleasant warmth pervaded the bed room from the wood fire in the chimney. Shea stopped a great clock that was ticking loudly

in a corner; but just as they were sinking to sleep a peculiar noise was heard in the kitchen beneath them.

"May I never," said Shea, sitting up in his bed, "if Biddy isn't making butter this hour of the night! I heard her tell Barney she'd churn, as the butter was out."

Sure enough, they could distinctly hear the thud of the dasher below. The servant, after her hard day's toil, was now setting to work at nearly one o'clock at night of her own accord to make butter for their breakfast.

"We ought to stop her; it's too bad, by Jove," said Hogan, who indeed was actuated more by fear of being kept awake than by consideration for the weary girl.

"Lord, no, man! don't do that," said Ned Shea; "she'd rather than not, and it wouldn't be gracious."

Hogan resigned himself to sleeplessness for the night, or the better portion of it; and while admiring the hospitable thoughtfulness of the poor handmaid, wished in his heart she would take it into her head that a night's rest was of more importance to the guest whom she delighted to honour. Not so, however:

the dasher went for hours; the monotonous sound ceased at last, and Hogan was able to follow the example of Shea, who, less sensitive of nerve, had long before sunk to sleep.

At about eight o'clock they rose and went to the pump where the master of the house usually performed his ablutions. Refreshed by the cold water, Hogan enjoyed his breakfast—a repetition of the supper of the night before, except that there was no punch; and directly afterwards they sallied forth to business, accompanied by Barney. The morning was dry and clear; and the sun, a welcome and rare visitor, lighted up the landscape cheerily. The grass seemed greener and fresher, the larches' silver bark and the red coats of the pines glistened and glowed after the rain; and behind, at the foot of the hill, the river shone like silver between the rows of tall bulrushes. They pulled up on the top of a hill; and away to the left, just at the bend of a distant wood, Hogan saw the smoke of the railway engine curling upwards, and just a faint echo of its rattle reached his ears. Shea pointed him out several of the farmhouses they were to visit, lying at different points of the landscape

before them: bare, ugly buildings, the plastered walls looking hideously discoloured by the rain. The great straggling ditches were overflowing, pools of rain-water lay on the fields, and came up almost to the doors of the houses.

"It's a terribly bare spot; wretched-looking! Have these fellows no leases? or what is the reason they have so little care of their places?"

"All tenants at will," returned Barney; "and if they were only to let MacScutch know they ate a good dinner, he'd be down on them and raise the rent in no time. It's their interest to be as poor as they can, and to look poor and miserable,—let alone to keep up a decent appearance. They're afraid to buy manure lest he should find it out; and that was always the way with these people."

"They have no capital to farm with?"

"Not a penny. See, there's Daly's house below,"—and Shea pointed with his whip to a long thatched house on the brow of a slight eminence opposite to them. "Daly married a girl with a fortune of six hundred the other day; well, instead of putting that in the land, he gave the two sisters two hundred each and portioned them off, and then the old father

and mother got two hundred for their share in the farm and place. That's the way down here; they'd never think of spending their money on stock, or putting it in the land at all."

"The two hundred the sisters each got will no doubt go in the same way."

"Exactly the same way: 'tis the custom. You know it wouldn't be fair for the son to get everything. He has the land, and then the money he gets with the wife fortunes off his sisters; they have a right to their share as well as him."

"But would it not better to put that money in the land, and——"

"It is to have the rent raised on him; and who'd take the sisters off his hands, either? These men never marry without a fortune."

"Ah! Daly's a queer chap," said Barney: a real clever fellow. He had a deal to do in the Fenian scare. Sure, he was a head-centre, and in prison too; he had to run to America. Wait till you see the place where the rifles that came from America were hid, and the old still in the haggard. Sure, he used to make four or five gallons of whiskey in the week."

"And was never found out?"

"Never. He gave it up, though, a while ago. You see he thought to make money on it; but all the neighbours round about used to be sending for a pint now and a quart again; an' so, begad, they all got it in a neighbourly way. Pat Daly was never the fellow to refuse them. So where was the good of wasting money and time, for them to have it to drink with their potatoes and buttermilk?"

"Not a very profitable business, certainly."

The horse now turned into a deep muddy lane, that led up the slope to Daly's house; and after a quarter of an hour's splashing and climbing, they found themselves before a broken gate. The house, beside which lay a stable-yard, ill kept and ruinous, like all the rest, was a long one-storied thatched building, that, had it been at all well kept or orderly, would have been comfortable and pretty to look at. The windows were broken, and the thatch out of repair; and a grassy slope, the lie of which would have delighted a gardener, before the house, was abandoned to the tender-mercies of a lank pig and her family, who had wandered out of the farm-yard. A couple of half-fed

dogs, which were roused from their sleep under the hedge, now set to barking with all their might and main.

The door of the house flew open, and a tall man, about thirty-five years of age, dressed in a smart suit of grey tweed, made his appearance. He wore a moustache and "goatee," like a Yankee, and used an immense number of Yankee idioms in his speech: in fact, but for the native brogue underlying and cropping up every now and then, he might almost have passed for a New York loafer.

"Now, Daly, this is Mr. Hogan—our member that is to be, please God," was Barney's introduction.

Mr. Daly at first thought of simply bowing, but remembering the usage of his adopted country, he held out a dirty hand, and honoured Hogan's with a prolonged shaking.

"Most proud to be acquainted, sir. Are you calk'lating to stay long with us in our part of this country, sir?"

Hogan explained his visit, and apologized for the necessary shortness of its duration. Mr. Daly, who grew more and more Yankee in

his accent as he resumed his self-confidence, led the way into the parlour, first driving out a couple of hens which had got in and were perched on the end of an old horsehair sofa. Hogan heard a scamper and rustle as he entered, and guessed sapiently that something else besides the poultry had received notice to quit. The floor was of clay, which certainly harmonised well in colour, and in other ways too, with the furniture and fittings. At one end of the room was an old square piano, open, perhaps with a view to showing that it really was a piano, and not another article of furniture; its small size and peculiar shape being calculated to give rise to doubts on the subject. At the other was an old-fashioned spindle-legged mahogany buffet, curiously inlaid with brass and bits of carved wood, but so thick with dirt, so encrusted with the dust and grease of ages, that it was only where the chance rubbings of passers-by had prevented extraneous accumulations that the original material could be seen. On this was placed, *mirabile dictu*, a gilt French clock under its glass shade—a paltry, vulgar thing, worth possibly some thirty shillings, and of

which the hands were fixed in stock immobility; perhaps, like its owners, too full of dignity and pride to do an honest day's work. On the walls were the prints to be found in every cabin—O'Connell, Robert Emmet, and a few of the hideous daubs Germany sends broadcast over the world, under the names of some of the more prominent members of the calendar of Roman saints. Over the fireplace, begrimed and smoky, hung a sewed picture, representing St. Patrick issuing from a magnificent Gothic church, the purely pointed style of which would have delighted the heart of Ruskin and Pugin. This, with the cushions on the sofa, were the handiwork of Mrs. Daly—a "lady," and of "shuparior edgication," as denoted by the same productions. The chairs were horsehair, like the sofa; like it, too, the majority of them were broken. The fireplace seemed a wilderness of papers, broken bottles, and ashes. A stale smell of punch and tobacco hung about the place; and on the chimneypiece was a suggestive-looking row of glasses—most of them *minus* the shanks. Even Barney Shane's bachelor den was less forlorn and hopeless looking than this.

"Wal, sir, be seated. I'm proud to see you." And Mr. Daly, after handing the most trustworthy-looking of the chairs to his guest, took up a free-and-easy bar-room sort of attitude on another. As a travelled man of the world, he assumed at once a superior tone with Barney and Ned Shea, meaning to impress them with his powers of conversing with the Dublin gentleman, and to establish himself at the same time in a proper position as a man of great political influence and experience, home and foreign, in the opinion of the member.

"Very bad weather for spring operations, Mr. Daly. Your sowing must be backward," began Hogan.

"We are behind, sir. I opine we'll have a real moist time all raownd. Country's most depressed at present, except as to politics, sir; we're pretty lively on politics just now. Home Rule's a-going to shake up the Britishers. Make the Government a fine darned fix there, hey, Barney? The Fenian scare won't be a patch on this."

"Ha, indeed! You are a Home Ruler, then, Mr. Daly?" Hogan was rather puzzled by the fellow, and scarcely knew where to begin.

"I should think I was: yes. Consid'able some, I am. Only the programme isn't quite so clear laid down as what I'd wish. However, sir, I guess that'll turn up all right. I hope it won't be long till we see a real Irish Republic: no half measures; the whole hog or none, that's my idea; and——"

"Ah! Come on now, Daly, wid yer stuff. Do you imagine Mr. Hogan is come to listen to your rubbish? A Republic, and a New York goverment—bah!" Ned Shea was the speaker, standing with his broad back against the chimneypiece.

"Why not?" said Barney. "Wouldn't Kilboggan be worse than any government? Ireland for the Irish; and no English thieves of landlords carrying the money over the sea to spend it."

"Right you are, Barney; and isn't everything, whiskey and beef and potatoes and all, going over the sea instead of being kept here for our use? Wait till we're up in Dublin, till you see the stopper we'll clap on exportation for them—yew bet."

"And where'll I get the price for my fat stall-feds?" said Ned Shea. "Bedad, Daly, 'tisn't

you and your Fenians and Home Rulers will give me my money for them, like the Liverpool salesmasters."

"And how about the clergy, Mr. Daly?" asked Hogan.

"The clergy, Mr. Hogan? what about them? The clergy have changed their tactics entirely. They were with us in '48; but in this last—the Fenian affair, you know—how scandalous their conduct was! They proved themselves utter renegades—mere truckling aristocracy worshippers. They want nothing; and what do they care for our patriotic aspirations? Their influence is gone. I bet my life, sir, I have more influence in the town this moment than the parish priest; and this Ballot business will do for them entirely. It's a real grand system, sir; and the landlords are equally defeated by it. Why, in America, sir,——"

There is no knowing where the loquacious Mr. Daly would not have dragged the conversation, had not the appearance of Mrs. Daly, in her Sunday silk dress, interrupted it. She was older than her husband; and had been a pretty woman, but was now slatternly

and unhealthy-looking. Her manner to Hogan had an assumption of familiarity and equality somewhat unpleasing, were it not for its ludicrousness. She affected to be cool with Shea because his wife had declined her acquaintance, though both families could be "traced up" to an equal height in point of pedigree. She apologized for the absence of her "servant" (such people have always servants), and going to a press in the wall, produced a blown-glass decanter of whiskey and another of highly-coloured sherry. Then, holding the glasses up to the light, she discovered that they had not been washed since the last time they were used; so in the most natural manner she stepped into the bedroom, and reappearing with a very dubious-coloured, but unmistakable bedroom towel, proceeded to rub the glasses in it. Hogan's gorge rose at the sight. Shea, who was as alive to the manœuvre as he, winked at him meaningly, as if encouraging him to an inevitable duty. It was of no use. Hogan begged for a cup of milk instead; and the hostess, good-natured and hospitable, however "clarty," granted his request. In return, Hogan held it

his duty to be agreeable, asked after Mrs. Daly's uncle, the parish priest of a southern parish, for whom he had once conducted a case; hoped to have the pleasure of meeting her at Kingstown in the summer; invited the husband to attend and speak at the meeting to be held at Ballinagad, and engaged him as agent and canvasser at once. The conversation became general then, and after a short time the visitors rose to go. Hogan, struck by a sudden thought, invited Daly to dinner at the Kilboggan Arms; and after a flourishing exchange of civilities they again mounted the car and began to thread their way down the boreen.

"That's a queer chap, now, isn't he, Mr. Hogan?" asked Barney,—"a very clever fellow entirely; if Pat Daly 'ud only mind himself, what's to hinder him going into Parliament, now, eh? Can't he speak beautiful?"

"Arrah, Barney, man," cried Ned Shea, "for God's sake what are you talking of at all? That dirty blathering fool,—ah!—him in Parliament? You wouldn't take the glass, then, Mr. Hogan?" and Ned Shea, now fairly out of earshot, laughed loud and long. "Well,

that's a fine-lady wife for you! Now you see Irish pride, Mr. Hogan. I suppose you never saw the like of that in Dublin yet. Well, well; and now, do you know, Pat Daly threw over a nice, smart, sensible girl, with a fine farm of her own, just because Miss Burke of Limerick was better family and had an uncle a parish priest. Ay,—right well you know it, too, Barney Shane, and yet you'll believe in him!"

"I give in to you there, indeed, Ned," returned Barney.

They held on now, up hill and down dale, through mud and water, on their round among the farmers. Everywhere Hogan received promises of support; everywhere he heard the same complaints of Kilboggan—the people all leaving for America, the little country shopkeepers ruined, the small farmers sold out, the farms knocked together or "squared," and let to those who could pay the heavy fines exacted, no leases renewed without fines, and all the money carried off to London and spent out of the country. Double wages to servants, and no servants to be had. The graziers and dairy-

farmers were all sub-letting grass and cows to a factor, who put in his own servants and took all the work off the owner's hands, paying so much rent per cow. This left the farmer little or nothing to do; and the spare time, it may be imagined, hung rather heavily on his hands. For all these evils Home Rule was looked to as the panacea. How, or why, they never troubled their heads to ask. It was the new shibboleth which was to succeed Fenianism, and to do all that Fenianism had left undone; just as Fenianism was to wipe up the tears of the young Irelanders or the Phœnix party—the fatal legacy of unrest and discontent that seems entailed on the Celt. Grand qualities these two: the first elements of progress in every nation, when turned in the right direction. Instead of setting themselves to hew a channel for these tempestuous waters, the would-be guides invoke the negative qualities beloved of Philistines from all time: common-sense, and content. What has common sense done for the world? and what has not content left undone?

It was Hogan's first exploration of the country parts of his native land; and he was

astonished beyond measure at the Irishness of everything. He had seen Boucicault's plays; and, like many of the audience, believed the characters to be the usual stock Hibernians that people the dramatists' brains—evoked ready-made with as little trouble as are the costumes out of the property-man's wardrobes; but here he might see Miles na Coppaleens and Shauns the Post walking by the ditches, dressed in the frieze coats, brimless hats, and knee-breeches so familiar to theatre-goers. The dirt, the carelessness, the merriment, the overflowing genuine hospitality,—all were present. Everywhere they went they had to take their glass of whiskey, which in the poorest place was always forthcoming, and drink to the toast of Home Rule. It was late in the day when the horse's head was turned homewards; but Hogan did not grudge the time or exertion, for he felt his cause was gaining.

On arriving at Mulla Castle he found a bundle of letters. A telegram from Saltasche told him the stale news that Wyldoates was on his way home, and might reach Kilboggan Castle next day. The Bishop, as usual, sent

a long epistle full of warnings and cautions. The Mother Superior of St. Swithin's scolded him for not coming to see her before leaving, and desired him on no account to omit to claim relationship with her in speaking to the Sheas, some of whose children were in her school. Hogan sat down until dinner-time to write letters, business and other. When he came down to the drawing-room, later on in the day, he found his host standing by the fire with a serious expression on his face.

"The priests are all gone to dine at Chapel House. That means a settlement of plans, Mr. Hogan. By this time they're all ordered to canvass for Wyldoates," began he.

"Whew!" returned the barrister, walking up to the fireplace; "that's the way now, is it?"

"Ah! you have no chance with them, sir. You see, Father Corkran's chapel is too small and too tumble-down entirely; and he wants that patch of ground off the main street that's Kilboggan's to dispose of, and Jim won't be given that for nothing. And then, too, the Quarries would be shut against him. Ah! it's a bad job—a bad job."

"Would no other plot of land but that lot suit him?"

"No: or he pretends not. Moreover, he don't like Home Rule—damn the bit. He knows well the Home Rule the people here are thinking of is just a regular Republic. In Dublin 'tis a sort of a Federal Parliament, with one of the Queen's sons for Lord Lieutenant, and a grand court and the rest of it. But, faith, 'tis a congress they want in this part; you can see it for yourself. Hear Daly."

"Do you mean to say that the priests and their candidate will carry the day against Home Rule? What! with the Ballot?"

"Bah!" put in Killeen, the editor, who just then came in; "not at all, Shea. Their back is broken, for good and all. I met Father Jim coming down street; and you might light a match on his face when I told him Wyldoates would be out in the cold. That's where he is, sure and certain, Mr. Hogan."

"Never fear, Mr. Killeen; but we have not a man to spare: recollect, over-confidence is very dangerous."

Knowing the indolent, easy-going fellows

with whom he had to deal, Hogan determined to stick to that as his motto. They went down to dinner—a somewhat quieter repast than that of the evening of their arrival. Dicky turned up in time, having been out canvassing, in company with the two best-looking daughters of the house.

Mrs. Shea was rather low-spirited; she had met Father Jim, and he had passed by without pretending to see her.

"Didn't see you, Margaret, hey?" said her husband; "wait till to-morrow, or next day, and he'll stare at you and never see you. I know him."

"And he's invited to dine at the Castle on Saturday. The housekeeper was down to the hotel; all the party are to stay there, and they're as busy as bees. Dear me!" sighed she wistfully, thinking it might be better that Ned had sided with the great folks. She felt confident that "The Castle" would win. It seemed so natural: grand folks, in Mrs. Shea's mind, had always a sort of divine right on their side in everything. Moreover, the mere fact that the priests were acting in the opposite interest gave her an uncomfortable

sensation. Nothing went right or well that they opposed or disapproved. How could it? And she began to conjure up in her own mind all the dismal stories she had ever heard: Hara's haggard burnt down not six months after he quarrelled with his clergy; Mr. Magrath, of High Park, who married the Protestant lady and drank himself to death within the year; Biddy Flannery, that would marry the Presbyterian sergeant, and had a deaf-and-dumb baby, and never held up her head after. It was tempting Providence, clearly, with "foot and mouth" raging in the very next county; and she determined to send a pound to her sister, the nun Mary Columbkille, of the Poor Clares, for such "intentions" and prayers as could be had for the money.

CHAPTER VIII.

The meeting of the voters announced to take place was held in a sort of large room over a schoolhouse, but now rented by the landlord of the rival hotel to the Kilboggan Arms, and used by him for various purposes—some of them, indeed, if report be credible, not calculated to bear the light of day in a political sense. There was an entrance through the tap of The Harp; and this was thronged by an unusual number of customers. All of these, having drunk their glass in the bar, slipped through a door opening into the yard of the public-house, and crossing it, found themselves at the entrance to a long, low room, dingy and cobweb-hung, having a sort of raised platform at one end.

Long before the hour the voters had been gathering in knots of three and five; and when Ned Shea and his cousin Barney, with whom was the accomplished Mr. Daly boiling over

with excitement and energy, arrived, the big room was nearly filled. Daly leading the way, they shouldered through the crowd up to the platform. Beside it stood a young fellow with a pocket-book in his hand, in which he was evidently writing down the names of those present. Barney looked round and round until he caught sight of some one particular person in the corner; then he leaned forward and caught the sleeve of the reporter.

"Do you see Finlay, the teacher, beyond?" he whispered. "Put down his name, my boy."

"Well, well, now; and he has just asked me not to do that same," answered the reporter, looking up with a puzzled stare.

"You'll do it, ma bouchal," was the quiet reply of Shane; and there was a glitter in the look he turned on the young man that impelled him to unquestioning obedience.

The person whose name Mr. Shane was so anxious to have thus honoured was a member of the body of national-school teachers. He had been appointed by Father Corkran; and

like most of his class in the Catholic provinces of Ireland, held his wretched situation entirely at the will of the priest, and was liable to be turned out at a moment's notice. As a matter of course, he lived in a state of abject submission to the whims of his patron; and instead of holding a position inferior only to that of the clergyman in public esteem, his very scholars despised and looked down on him as no better than a servant. Shane knew he was a creature of the parish priest, and that he had come to the meeting unknown to his master, or had been sent to it by him as a spy. Therefore his action as above related.

In a very short time the room was filled by the big frieze-coated men; and Ned Shea, who had been counting them as they entered, advanced to the front of the platform. Striking his ground-ash stick on the floor, he looked round the room. In an instant perfect silence prevailed; and he began in a loud clear voice:—

"Boys,—I don't need, I suppose, to tell you for what purpose we are assembled here. You know what Mr. Hogan wants of us; and you

know Kilboggan. The Land Tenure we'll never get without Home Rule first; and to get Home Rule is now the heart's desire of every Irishman, whether he owns one sod of land or no. I have a lease for a hundred and ninety-nine years, and he can't touch me; but it's not so with ye. An' what do ye look forward to, an' what do ye expect to get for the money ye put in the land?" ("Compensation, wisha!" interpolated an old farmer in a tone of concentrated bitterness). "That's not enough. As for trusting the word of this London fine gentleman, that's come over now with his palaver, we know the Wyldoates breed too well for that." A laugh followed this; and the blackthorns and ground-ashes were grasped tighter in the great brawny fists of their owners. "But for Father Corkran he would not have a chance. He's against Home Rule, so he is; and he's always, like plenty more of the clergy, played into the hands of the landlords." ("Aye, did he,—true for you, Shea.") "Home Rule doesn't seem to suit the clergy at all: why I can't tell; but from the first I see they're against it,—or if they're not against it, they're not for it—they think we ought to demand

the University first. Well, I say, let those that want the University ask for it; we have no call with that; and those that have call to it don't seem to care. We want Fixity of Tenure and Home Rule; and it's to Mr. Hogan and men like him, we must look, and not an absentee like Kilboggan, that's draining every penny out of this country to spend it in London and France, and all them foreign parts."

A burst of applause followed Ned Shea's deliverance; and he sat down to make way for his impetuous cousin Barney, who stalked up to the extreme front of the platform and with one hand under the tails of his great frieze cothamore, and a sardonic grin on his florid countenance, began:—

"Father Corkran condescended the pleasure of his company to dinner at the Castle yesterday. Oh, begor—thruth I'm spakin'," he added, seeing the surprise on the faces of the "mountain'y" people, to whom this important political item was news. "And," continued the orator, turning his face in profile to the audience, and looking out of the corners of his blue eyes with an inimitable expression of

drollery, "the new chapel will be purceeded with immadiately." A chorus of laughter showed that his intelligence was fully appreciated. "And the weather bein' so bad for canvassing, 'tis likely his reverence will have his new covered car home soon. Faith, boys,"—and here Barney dropped the sardonic bantering style, and turned full front to the audience,—"if this goes on, in a very short time his reverence will be indipindint of weddings even." ("Easy, Barney—be easy, now!" remonstrated his cousin.) "Everything," roared the speaker, "that he can grab for himself; an' the country can go to the divle! He has sold the votes he can command to Wyldoates just as you or I'd sell a bushel of spuds; and let him, too—let him sell the beggarly wretches he has his paw on; but he'll not get a vote out of Ballinagad." ("No, no—not one!" resounded from the hearers, and an indescribable din of excited shouting and tramping deafened Barney for a moment.) "Stand up for your rights, boys, and let them see there's life in Peatstown yet! Never heed sweet words or promises; be warned by Morty Sinnot." (Morty Sinnot was a farmer who had been

evicted shortly after an election; notwithstanding the promises of the *candidate*, on which he foolishly relied, and which the *member* found it convenient to forget.) "And leave Father Corkran where he is. I wish him joy of his chapel and his ground; he may build the house—let him take care lest another man live in it. The days are gone by when the soggarths stood up for the cause. They got the Protestant Church turned out, but they have not got the money; and there's the last of them. They're afraid of Home Rule; they're afraid to lose the little beggarly cringing importance they have, in this way of politics, with the landed gentry. 'Tisn't for us they're working now,—'tis for themselves. I always said it," he shouted: "as long as the soggarth by rowing in our boat suited himself and his own aims, he did it; but now we're pulling in opposite directions entirely."

"You're wrong now, Barney," spoke a shopkeeper, in the crowd. "The priests are working for us when they are working for Catholic Education. And the Catholics ought to have a college as good as Trinity. Why

should a man be forced to send his son among a swaddling crew, or go without college education altogether?"

"Augh!" replied Shane; "there's lots of Catholics talking and pretending, and all the time their sons are in Trinity College, and they'd rather put them there than to any Catholic university. Hasn't Father Corkran got his own nephew there? Answer me that! Sure every great man we have got his education in Old Trinity; and it's proud of her, Protestants and all, we ought to be. Where did O'Connell and every one of them larn what they knew? Answer me that! Look at Wyldoates himself—a Trinity man. And Father Corkran supporting them. Arrah! where's the use of my talking at all?" he burst forth in a fit of uncontrollable excitement; "Home Rule and O'Rooney Hogan for ever!"

Then came Mr. Daly, the ex-American; and he, assuming his very best Yankee accent for the occasion, dilated at length on the merits of the Ballot system; "high-falutin" as his speech was, he did some good by explaining the working of the machinery, which he illustrated on the wall with a piece of charred stick, and by

following the programme laid down for him by Hogan. Others succeeded; most of them detailing their own grievances, all declaiming against their landlord, and vaunting the universal panacea, Home Rule.

CHAPTER IX.

"On ne voyait, à la naissance de l'église, que des Chrétiens parfaitement instruits dans tous les points nécessaires au salut. Au lieu qu'on voit aujourd'hui une ignorance si grossière, quelle fait gémir tous ceux qui ont des sentiments de tendresse pour l'église, ... on n'y était reçu alors qu'après avoir abjuré sa vie passée, qu'après avoir renoncé au monde, et à la chair, et au diable. On y entre maintenant avant qu'on soit en état de faire aucun de ces choses . . . . Enfin, il fallait autrefois sortir du monde, pour être reçu dans l'église, au lieu qu'on entre aujourd'hui dans l'église au même temps que dans le monde . . . . On les voit maintenant confondus et mêlés, en sorte qu'on ne les discerne quasi plus."—*Pensées de Pascal.*

PEATSTOWN, we have said, was built on the river, and consequently lay low in a hollow flanked by hills, or at least what were hills by courtesy, for in reality they were very modest eminences. The main street of the town lay parallel with the river, and was a continuation of a road that led straight up the high ground past the parish chapel and the graveyard, which sloped to the very edge of the

highway—from which, by just leaning a little forward over the railings, you could read the inscriptions on the weather-stained tombstones. The road, however, ran on direct and straight; and of course soon parted company with the erratic stream, which bent and twisted at its own unstable will, past meadow-land and fallows, corn-fields and bog, far off to the west, to lose itself at last in the broad bosom of the Shannon.

On the river side, as you went towards the chapel, which crowned the height and looked down on the sleepy little town, stood a long, low, slated house, built below the road level, with brass-barred windows, and a hall door, to enter which, you descended a couple of granite steps. At the end of this house, and behind it, ran a garden, whose low, moss-grown wall overlooked the stream at the back—the brawling of which came pleasantly in the open windows in summer time, and mingled harmoniously with the song of the bees at work among the lime trees and the lavender hedges. Dead creepers overhung the walks, and long withered arms of clematis and jessamine stretched themselves down to meet the flood plashing by below.

The garden was laid out in terraces; and big white vases full of geraniums, pinched and blackened by the frost, stood exactly at each corner of the prim gravel walks. In the centre was an arbour—arches of wood-laths crossed, covered with ivy and creepers; in which stood a plaster-of-Paris Madonna, sadly weather-beaten and discoloured, chipped and cracked. Hens and chickens roved through the garden, picking up a supplementary and scanty diet among the weed-grown beds; and a surly terrier, chained to an old wooden box, lay with eyes fixed in hungry expectation on the kitchen door.

It was nearly half-past nine; and Father Corkran, the owner of the house, having finished breakfast, seated himself by the window with the *Peatstown Torch* for a quiet couple of hours, before proceeding to the chapel to preach the midday sermon. He had scarcely got half-way through the very first column when he startled violently, and turned over the page, and began to read and count a number of names printed in a double column. He threw down the paper before he

had finished, and going to the fireplace, rang the bell furiously. A little girl opened it, and looked timidly in.

"Cattey, did you see the schoolmaster go up to the catechism yet?"

"No, sir."

"Call down to his house this moment, and bid him to come up to me, and not to lose a minute. I'll put a stop to this work. This wretched insect!" he growled; "to think of his audacity!"

Then he walked over to a press in the wall, and unlocking it, took out a thick memorandum book, which he unclasped. He seated himself then at his desk, and turned over the leaves until he came to a page on which were two columns of names; before some of these there were crosses in red ink affixed. Then, taking up the paper again, he proceeded to copy down a number of additional ones from the list of those who attended the Thursday night's meeting. Some of the names—among them Barney Shane's—were already included in his reverence's own collection; and to these he affixed a red-ink cross, or a second one if they were already so decorated. This list of sinners

kept Father Corkran's memory green; and whenever opportunity served, he found a means of paying off the offenders on his own account, or, as he would call it himself, of being the instrument of Divine justice or vengeance. If a lease expired and the tenant prayed for renewal, a word from Father Corkran went a long way with the agent in either direction. If a bill was due at the bank his reverence was well aware of the fact, and the manager was sure to abide by his advice. Then, if the farmer was turned out, or the little shop-keeper sold up, the general verdict referred the catastrophe to Providence, whose inscrutable ways and means were never questioned. The tenant-farmer or the little huckster, had "*gone against the priest*"; and, as is well known, that sort of conduct is "*unlucky*."

His reverence had scarcely finished his task and replaced the memorandum book on the shelf of the press, when a knock at the door announced the arrival of the person for whom he had sent.

"Come in," said Father Corkran, in a short gruff tone, flinging himself into his easy-chair

by the fire as he spoke, and turning a scowling face full on the new comer.

The national schoolmaster was an insignificant looking man of about thirty years of age, shabbily dressed, and with a nervous expression of eye. He entered timidly, with his hat in one hand and with the other fumbling with the lock of the door. No salutation of any kind was exchanged.

"What's this I hear, sir? Is this your name at the meeting at the Harp on Friday?" and his reverence, pointing with his index finger to the newspaper, seemed, threatening as was his tone, to be willing to admit that there might be some doubt on the question —that his senses might be playing him false.

The schoolmaster's eyes drooped submissively before the angry glare of his patron, and he answered, "It is, your reverence."

"And how dare you,—you!" he thundered, with concentrated scorn, "attend any meeting without my permission and approbation?"

"I didn't think it any harm, sir," was the deprecating answer.

"If ever you presume to attend any such gathering, or to busy yourself with anything

of the sort again, without first consulting me, I'll turn you away on the spot, mark my words," and he shook his forefinger threateningly. "Begone now!" and pointing to the door with the gesture he might have used to an ill-behaved dog, he dismissed the terrified schoolmaster, who, glad to get off so lightly, took himself away as fast as possible. He was too well used to his ruler's tyranny to mind such outbursts; and his only feeling was one of thankfulness that Father Corkran had not selected the schoolroom to humiliate him in the presence of his scholars, as he was in the habit of doing.

Last mass was unusually well attended this particular Sunday; it being known that Father Corkran had been in treaty with the Wyldoates faction, a manifesto from the altar of more than usual interest was accordingly expected. All the parishioners of any standing were in their accustomed places; and when mass was finished, the kneeling crowd at the sides thronged up to the rails of the altar almost simultaneously, so eager were they to hear the declaration. The usual prayers after mass were totally unheeded; and all eyes were

fixed anxiously on the sacristy door. After some five minutes' or so expectation—for Father Corkran was above mere punctuality—the sacristy door swung wide open, and the parish priest, clad in black soutane (no alb), walked forth.

He ascended the steps of the altar, and stood with his back to it, looking steadily for some moments at the people before him. His unusual vestment, the wrathful frown on his face, all were pregnant and ominous of indignation pent up, and ready to burst forth. A pin might have been heard to fall; and the heart of every listener beat faster, whether in expectation, dread, or defiance. After this impressive pause, he began, in a distinct and deliberate tone, grating and hideous to the ear:—

"It was not my intention to address you to-day on the subject that is, no doubt, uppermost in the minds of all of you: I mean, the election. But circumstances have occurred that make it necessary I should deviate for your guidance" (he emphasized these words) "from that purpose. There are times when it becomes a duty—and I will be the last to

shrink from a duty, however painful, which a man owes to himself and to others" (here he paused an instant),—"I mean that he should speak out when he will be criminal if he remain silent. As I said, I did not intend to address you at all on this matter, foolishly confident as I was that no one else would take on my place—would have the *brazen audacity* to attempt to influence your opinions. There are, it seems, in this town"—(these words were hissed out with all possible bitterness) —"ill-minded, ill-conditioned men who have determined to go on presuming on my forbearance as far as I will let them. And lest the simple, honest, disinterested electors should be led astray by disturbers of this class, I have resolved to expose their schemes.

"You have two candidates soliciting your votes. Now, there never was a time when Irishmen were more urgently called upon to send honest, upright men to Parliament than the present. A great deal has been done for Ireland in the last few years, and a great deal more remains to be done. The incubus of the Established Church, which was supported by the *plundered revenues* of

the Catholics, has been got rid of. The honest, hard-working farmer has obtained some measure of justice, which must be still further complemented by Fixity of Tenure before he can be secured in the fruits of his toil; and there still remains the great question of religious Education for your children.

"To those rulers who have given us so much, it is, then, that we are to look for more; and we shall best show our gratitude by sending in a fit and proper person to co-operate with them in their good works—one who will have your interest at heart, not his own, who will not make promises without meaning to keep them, and who will not offer himself to this minister or to that for the highest penny. We hear a great deal of what is called *pay*-triotism—bless the mark!—these times: well, I think myself as good a patriot as any of these fellows who shout 'Home Rule,' 'Ireland for the Irish,' and the rest of it—all blatherum. 'We'll have no one but a Home Ruler,' says Mr. Barney Shane and Mr. Ned Shea"—(immediately every eye in the chapel was turned full on the Sheas' seat, to

the consternation of the family). "There are good Irishmen and bad Irishmen; and I prefer any day a good *English*man, who belongs to a family traditionally good, because, therefore, we have the greater security that he will be good himself—to any place-hunting, pettifogging blackguard who calls himself an Irishman. The candidate who has a fortune and position—who commands the respect of ministers, and is at the same time independent of them—has in this fortune and position a guarantee of his fidelity to his principles, and is therefore the one entitled to our support.

"Mr. Wyldoates, I do not hesitate to say, is that candidate. He has a fortune, and can despise office; so he is not likely to throw you over for a paltry situation—the price of a vote adverse to your interests. He is pledged to support your just demands: and to give you a sample of what he is prepared to do for you, the right"—(here his voice was raised, and directed towards the side-aisles)—"the right of turf-cutting will be conceded to the Sandy-Row people." (Murmurs of applause.) "And moreover the lot for the building of the

new church is promised, and a donation of one hundred pounds already given; and the works will be at once commenced.

"I don't need to tell you that where tradesmen are employed at high wages, as they will be, their money soon finds its way to the pockets of the grocer and baker and butcher, and of course the publican. Mr. Wyldoates does not go in for Home Rule—that mischievous, iniquitous agitation, the work of a few political desperadoes who have broken up the Liberal party in Ireland, retarded Mr. Gladstone's wise legislation, and done more harm to their country than all its enemies. What would they do with Home Rule? Sell it again, as they did before. They know that their project is a sham; and they are not even of one mind as to the form that sham is to take. Some call it Home Rule, others Federation, others Repeal. Have nothing to do with schemes or schemers, till you know more about them. Be warned!" Then looking at a paper he held in his hand, he continued, after a pause: "This is a requisition that has been presented to me, asking me to convoke a meeting of the parishioners to choose delegates to send to the

meeting on Wednesday. Some very wise people in their own estimation have thought fit to propose this county meeting, for the purpose of determining whether the adoption of the Home Rule programme shall be the test of qualification for our future member. I see no obligation for your sending delegates at the bidding of these self-constituted authorities. If any movement of the kind were to be made here, I think *I* (his anger rising to apoplectic pitch) ought to be the best judge of its necessity. But there are *some* people for whom nothing is too hot or too heavy, the devil is so busy with them. They are the black sheep, who, if allowed to go on unchecked, would soon infect the whole flock. Let them not, or their abettors, push me too far. I have put down disturbers before. I have peeled the skin off them, and I'll do it again." (Here Mrs. Shea left the church, sobbing hysterically.) "Is it to them you go for advice or assistance in any extremity? No: to your priest. Whose influence in every way is oftenest asked for? Mine. 'Men may come and men may go'"—(his reverence, we may

be sure, was ignorant whence he drew his apt quotation),—"but who have you always? who have you at the last? Your priest, the true shepherd. Go not with the hireling. You have known men in this parish who went against their priest; and you have yourselves seen their fate: swept away like the froth of the river!" (Frightful groaning from the side-aisles.) "And as the true shepherd knows his flock, and his flock know him, *I* shall mark out the black sheep, and *remember* him among you who does not heed my voice."

Then, after a genuflection at the foot of the altar, the parish priest returned to the sacristy. The people dispersed; the men crowding together—some laughing, some indifferent, a few frightened; the women for the most part in consternation, and foreboding the advent of the general judgment at least—one or two of them, defiant and reckless, maybe revengeful, cackling shrill sedition from beneath their blue hoods, the cynosure, the while, of their more impressionable sisterhood. In spite of the cold drizzle of rain falling without, the crowd delayed a long time in the churchyard, intensely excited by the parish priest's heavily-

shotted defiance, the women recalling to each other, with fearful groans, all the terrible "judgments" that had heretofore overtaken rebels to his reverence's authority, and connecting Hogan in some vague way with the enemies of the Church, scientific, politic and other, who were condemned in general terms diurnally in the *Enfranchiser*, and in particular, and by name, three or four times per annum in the pastorals. At last they scattered, some home to the town, some by car or on foot away to the hills, murky and cheerless in the all-encircling gloom.

CHAPTER X.

"Look, where the holy legate comes apace
To give us warrant from the hands of Heaven,
And on our actions set the name of right
With holy breath."

King John.

On Wednesday evening Mr. Wyldoates, whose aristocratic and slightly imbecile countenance bore traces of the fatigues of his long journey, was lounging in a deeply-cushioned easy-chair in the library at Kilboggan Castle, spending a bad quarter of an hour in company with the family lawyer, Mr. Hanaper, who was also Crown Solicitor for the county, and Mr. MacScutch, the agent and manager of the Kilboggan property. They were waiting the arrival of Father Corkran; and Mr. Wyldoates, whose very soul was weary, was yawning fearfully. He had brought down a select couple of friends from Dublin; and these gentlemen were occupying their leisure

in looking over the billiard-room and its appurtenances. Their entertainer considered himself perfectly victimised in being forced to spend time on such humbug as canvassing. Not a creature in the county: no hunting! Not a horse fit to ride in the stable; nothing but a hack or two of MacScutch's. This last discovery was enough by itself to put him in a rage. "Like his considerateness," he growled, thinking of his relative. It was hard work talking to these legal gentry while pool was going on in the left wing of the same house; and Mr. Wyldoates made them feel all his ill-temper.

"What's this fellow's name that's down here? Has he been here long?" he asked of his agent, in an insolent, impatient tone.

"Mr. Hogan, a Dublin barrister; he has been here since Wednesday, driving all over the place canvassing. The hill people are all promising him, I'm told."

Mr. Wyldoates was in the act of growling a curse in reply to this intelligence, when the door opened; and Father Corkran, resplendent in a black velvet waistcoat, crossed several times by a huge gold chain, appeared.

Mr. Wyldoates rose immediately, and putting on his grand manner, advanced to meet him.

"My dear Father Corkran, you are most kind."

"How do you do, my dear sir?" replied his reverence, with equal warmth. And the two gentlemen, who had never seen each other in their lives before, shook hands in the most cordial style. "I wish you every success in your venture."

"Thanks," replied the ex-dragoon. "But you see this—ah—lawyer fellow has got the start of me."

Mr. Hanaper, a stout, tall man, with gold spectacles, glanced up an instant at the speaker in a manner that betrayed surprise, and was meant to convey a warning, and then resumed his study of the list in his hands.

"Oh dear me! never think of that," said Father Corkran in a most confident tone; "he has been busy among the farmers; but the town is ours—our stronghold, quite—if my advice is followed."

A discreet personage clad in black here glided in, and announced dinner, between

two bows to the arm-chair in which Mr. Wyldoates' puny figure was almost hidden.

They all adjourned to the dining-room—Mr. Wyldoates leading the way, with evident pleasure.

It was a grand chamber; panelled in black oak, and hung round with family portraits. The glittering silver and wax-lights were reflected in the mirrored buffets; and a fine epergne filled with hot-house flowers, camellias, heaths, and delicate ferns, formed a delightful *point de mire* in the centre of the table. The chairs were of antique oak and stamped leather, with the crest of the Kilboggans in raised work on the backs. The mantelpiece was a superb block of marble inlaid with *lapis lazuli*, and most beautifully carved. There was no grate; the logs burned in the picturesque, old-fashioned style on the hearthstone. The velvet curtains were closely drawn, and the room heated to the exact pitch.

Father Corkran's face beamed with delight and exultation. He was placed on the right-hand of the host, who exerted himself creditably, and did the honours of the table with an

easy grace and assiduity. The two gentlemen who had accompanied him down from Dublin made their appearance hastily by the side-door, from their tour of inspection. A rapid introduction was gone through, and they took their seats near each other, keeping up an *ex-parte* conversation during dinner.

"What cook have you?" asked Mr. Wyldoates abruptly of the butler, turning over something on his plate as he spoke, and eyeing it with evident disfavour.

"Kilboggan Arms, sir," returned the man deprecatingly.

"Good Gad!" said Wyldoates, turning to Mr. Hanaper, "the place is literally falling into ruin. Telegraph to the Bilton for a cook immediately," he added; "and, Kelly, be sure you desire them to send a good one. This is truly abominable. Papillon and Germaine, are you able to eat anything?"

The two gentlemen hastily uttered disclaimers and assurances, and went on with their dinner, apparently thoroughly contented with it. Mr. Hanaper, who seemed utterly unconscious of this episode, employed a short interlude in scrutinizing the reverend

Mr. Corkran's lineaments; then, clearing his throat, he in the most unctuous tones asked,—

"Father Corkran, you are, I believe, vicar-general of this diocese, under Bishop Gogarty."

"I am, sir; I have that honour."

"Indeed! and how is his lordship," went on Mr. Hanaper, in the tone of a family doctor. "I had the pleasure of meeting him on a former occasion, nearly thirty years ago. It was on the occasion of Colonel Bursford's election for the county. Do *you* remember?"

This "do *you* remember" was a fine touch, and full of subtle flattery. It was a statement by implication that the good vicar-general was not old enough to recall the events of nearly thirty years back. He was as old as Mr. Hanaper—every day; but then the latter was Crown Solicitor for the county, and had reached the top of the attorney ladder, whereas the mitre and crozier still haunted the dreams of the parish priest.

"Remember it! dear, yes. Bishop Gogarty held my parish then." Here a little half-sigh said plainly, "Would that he held it still!" "Con. Delahunty came forward to oppose him.

Fifteen hundred the colonel paid him to retire. There's no harm saying it now."

"None, indeed; they're both dead. We have lived to see a great change, my dear sir—a great change indeed!"

"And we'll see a greater yet, I'm certain. Things are come to a pretty pass indeed." And his reverence swallowed a piece of sole *au gratin* with a snort.

Mr. Die Sele, a little dried-up man, too intensely Orange to care much for his reverence's company, looked sympathizingly at his client, who was wearily toying with the food on his plate.

"You seem very fatigued, Mr. Wyldoates: have you travelled straight on?"

"Yes; straight on from Nice, anyhow. My uncle telegraphed to me to come on, since the Reform have put forward this cad so suddenly. Otherwise, I shouldn't have moved until—the fourteenth." It plainly required an effort of an unusual kind for him to remember the date.

MacScutch, a northern, deeply tarred with the same brush as the little Die Sele, conversed with him in low tones.

"What's that you're sayin', MacScutch?

This Hogan's a barrister in good practice, hey? Don't believe you," said Mr. Wyldoates, who had caught up some fragment of their speech.

"Dear, yes," hastily interpolated Father Corkran, seeing his way to a certain effect, "Mr. O'Rooney Hogan is a barrister of standing. I assure you he distinguished himself on several occasions; and he goes into the best society in Dublin. I must do the young man that justice, though I don't care for him myself. Of course we all know what his motives are in going into Parliament."

"I should think so—scum!" Mr. Wyldoates' lip curled contemptuously. "What a business this Home Rule is turning out for these fellows! The Irish bar have always gone in on the stalking-horse of national politics."

"Softly, my dear sir," said Mr. Hanaper, in his oiliest tones, but with a sneer on his face; "what has the English bar had to do with politics? I think our men could show cleaner hands than the bigwigs over the water, past and present."

Mr. Wyldoates turned abruptly to the attendant.

"Coffee in the library! and, Kelly, see that

there's a good fire. Germaine, were you at the levee? I did not arrive in time. If I had I'd have gone, I think."

"Yes, of course," replied Mr. Germaine quickly. "Everybody was there. His Ex'cy was talking to me about my mare. Would I enter her for Fairyhouse? I said I thought not; but would save her up for Punchestown. Sells better always, you know. He's looking remarkably well."

"Oh, ah! he loves a good horse, does his Ex'cy," put in Mr. Hanaper, who, as a solicitor, was debarred from the honour of attending Court, but who relished "Cawstle gossip" as keenly as anybody else.

Mr. Germaine, feeling himself the central personage for the moment, surveyed the speaker through his eyeglass, and then went on in a slightly raised tone,—

"I was out with the Ward Unions on—ah—Tuesday; and Betty Martin was awfully fresh. I was taking her up a lane between two hedges, when I heard a horse coming up behind us, as if wanting to pass me. I didn't feel like letting him; for Betty Martin doesn't follow very kindly. So I just hallooed, 'Keep

off, will you! this horse kicks.' 'Do pray go on, then,' said a voice; and I turned, and by Jove, it was his Excellency himself. I believe you, I cleared the road."

Everybody listened with the most profound attention: even Wyldoates' languid countenance put on a glimpse of intelligent appreciation befitting the stirring incident which the gallant hero had related about six times per diem since its occurrence.

"How did you find the billiard table?" he asked, as the party rose and moved towards the door.

"Oh, capital—capital. Are you going to try it?"

"Well, I'll join you there directly. You can smoke here, if you like."

The two remained in the dining-room, and the rest returned to the library. Wyldoates locked the door, and drew the heavy curtain before it. "Father Corkran," said he, with an air and tone so business-like and decisive that it astonished the others, "let us come to an understanding. This Home Rule candidate is to be trusted for nothing, but to fill his own pockets."

"That's as may be. I don't know. You see his party have a swinging majority. My dear sir, the Whigs hold the country, and will do so for—oh, who can say how long? The Tories are nowhere; they are dissolving every day more and more."

"This means," thought Wyldoates, who was astute enough in some matters, "that I had better come down with something handsome on the nail. His reverence prefers a bird in the hand—hum. Now, Father Corkran," he added aloud, raising his drooped eyelids and looking steadily at his reverence, "as to Home Rule, why, we are Home Rule too. Hanaper, give me my address."

But Father Corkran, with a knowing sort of laugh,declined to read the address. Clearly, he was not to be blinded that way. "Mr. Wyldoates," said he sturdily, "leave all that flummery there. Exert your influence with your tenants, and procure the co-operation of those who can manage the town votes." And Father Corkran threw one leg over the other, and leaned back in his chair with the air of one who had said his say.

"Oh dear, yes," returned Mr. Wyldoates,

with a grin; "see here, Father Corkran, we are prepared to go to great lengths, I assure you."

Then the solicitors stepped into the discussion; and the lot of ground was indicated on the map which was most suitable for the new church; and finally Mr. Wyldoates, after much preamble, signed a cheque which was filled up for him by Hanaper, and handed it ungraciously enough to his reverence, who, discontented with the amount, received it to the full as ungraciously, and stuffed it into the capacious pocket of his velvet waistcoat without acknowledgment or thanks beyond a surly bow.

The business over, he left almost at once.

"Well," yawned Wyldoates, "that's done; and if he is not with us he won't be against us. You published the decision about that Sandy Row right of turf-cutting, hey, Mac-Scutch?"

Mr. Wyldoates then vanished to the more congenial society of the billiard-room, where his friends Germaine and Captain Papillon were playing.

CHAPTER XI.

"HOTSPUR.— * * * Sometimes he angers me
With telling me of the moldwarp and the ant,
Of the dreamer Merlin and his prophecies;
And of a dragon and a finless fish,
A clip-winged griffin and a moulten raven,
And such a deal of skimble-skamble stuff
As puts me from my faith. I tell you what:
He held me but last night, at least nine hours,
In reckoning up the several devils' names
That were his lackeys."

King Henry IVth.

HOGAN had not honoured the meeting at The Harp with his presence. He found it unnecessary to do so. The people seemed entirely on his side; and the Home Rule epidemic having seized upon them with such hold, the illusory promises and threats of the Wyldoates faction were not accounted much, either by him or by his clients. He was tired of the work, too, and gladly alleged an engagement in the Four Courts to justify his leaving by the mid-day mail on Friday. He left Dicky Davoren

behind—to carry on the work of canvassing, ostensibly; but shrewdly suspected, at the same time, that the young gentleman's exertions would not go far to swell his lists. For various reasons, Hogan avoided all encounter with the parish priest. He knew that the good-natured curate, Father Desmond, was on his side; but not wishing to compromise him in any way, he kept out of his way too. The Sheas accompanied him to the railway station—Ned Shea trying hard to make the candidate promise to accept his hospitality on his return for the grand meeting to be held the following week. But Hogan declined the offer with sincere gratitude and equal determination. He saw clearly that his hostess was miserably uncomfortable on her husband's account; and divining pretty accurately the nature of the declaration to be expected from Father Corkran on the coming Sunday, he wisely resolved to shift his quarters to the hotel; alleging to the Sheas, as his explanation for so doing, that it was a more convenient situation. He promised to be back in time for the meeting, but had grave doubts within himself as to the advisability of going to it and of making a speech of the Ultra hue

that he would be necessarily obliged to in order not to fall out with his too-ardent supporters. These and many other thoughts he revolved in his mind, as he lay back in the cushions of the railway carriage. It chanced that an ocean mail had arrived that morning; so the train was filled with Americans on their way to Dublin from Queenstown. Hogan's compartment was crowded with them, discoursing nasal depreciations of everything they could see from the windows. He got into conversation with one of them—a little gentleman, with a funny round body, somewhat reminding one of a spider's, and with curiously attenuated legs. The likeness did not end there, as Hogan acknowledged to himself ere long. The little Yankee was a species of intellectual spider, sucking dry the brains of every one he could entangle in the web of questions which he seemed to emit and weave round the hapless victim as easily and skilfully as any member of the *arachnidæ*. There was no getting out of it: every plunge landed one deeper in. Hogan vainly tried to exchange parts, and with his barrister practice opened up sidings and new issues beyond counting.

The little man was great on figures. He asked the "population" of every "town," as he persisted in calling the stations at which the train stopped—some of them five or seven miles away from the place from which they took their name. He popped his head out, in this thirst for information, at a wooden station on the edge of the bog, and hailing anybody on the platform, asked at large—

"Say, stranger, what's the name of this city?" Every one stared.

"Hey? what's the name?" Then, getting impatient, "I guess it ain't big enough to have a name of its own."

"Oh yes, it is," retorted a big cattle-driver who was seated on a railing, smoking his pipe; "an' it's got a popilation of its own—two millions."

The American shut up the window with a burst of derisive laughter, and sitting down, slapped his leg and said, good-humouredly,—

"The gentleman thinks he's made a real fine joke now." Then he went to the subject of national schools, and drew Hogan into an elaborate explanation of the working of the system. The train passed a peat-condensing

manufactory as they went along; and he made a man who had got in after Hogan tell him all about the process. That done, he returned to his first victim, and got him on the geological formations of the different counties they passed through. Hogan's knowledge was speedily exhausted, to his own surprise quite as much as that of the American, who told him that his own countrymen, almost without exception, were thoroughly "posted" in those matters. A priest who, out of curiosity, changed his seat to hear what the eager-looking little man was saying, was then swept in, and made to tell all he knew about cattle-breeding,—the sight of a field of fat kine having suggested the topic. The American wanted to know what were "black" cattle, and why the south of Ireland was noted for that particular colour. He was told by the priest that the cattle alluded to in the old Irish historical writings were always spoken of as being black, and that it was supposed that the original tribe of cattle—possibly those imported by the first colonists, who were Milesians—were black. The American was delighted: this kind of

information was especially to his liking. He knew very well where the Milesians originally hailed from; he had been there.

"Been in Asia Minor! Dear me!" said his reverence admiringly.

"Yes, I've bin all over—bin everywhere and I fully bullieve, sir, that all cattle was black in the beginning. I mean that God created 'em so—I dew; for when I was in Palestine I noticed all their cattle was black. Yes, sir—that just proves the whole question most clearly; and they told me in Palestine they'd bin always just so."

"Hem!—You spoke the language?" asked Hogan, in a curiously constrained tone.

"No, sirree—didn't take time. Can you tell me, sir, what is the prevailing notion here just now on this Home Rule?"

"It is not very—ah—easy to say. Society is divided on that subject——"

"Society? Ah! but I don't mean society, sir; I mean the people."

"Well, a good many of them go in pretty strong for it—just as strongly here as you may have noticed among a certain class of them in New York, now. I suppose the

extreme democratic party there favour the scheme, do they not?"

Not a question would the American answer; he had come out to take, not to give—that was perfectly clear; and Hogan, amused beyond measure, but with a little irritation mingled with his sense of the absurdity, resigned himself to the tender-mercies of the little vampire for the rest of the way. However, at Portarlington, where they stopped for refreshments, and where the American, telling him if he "wasn't thirsty he had ought ter be," insisted on his taking a drink, he contrived by a clever manœuvre to get a seat in another carriage, and to scribble some pencil notes to have ready for the mail on reaching town.

One of these notes reached Miss Nellie Davoren next morning at breakfast time. She opened it quite unconsciously, thinking it some mere business letter; but when she glanced over the few lines, written in a bold hand, as clear and easy to read as large print, and saw the signature "J. O'Rooney Hogan" at the bottom, she was so startled as to be surprised in her own mind at herself. She left the room quickly, as if to go upstairs to

her mother; but in reality she ran into her own chamber, and seating herself in the window, drew out the wonderful letter, sorely crumpled in the pocket into which she had thrust it in the agitation of the moment.

She set herself to con every word, line, and sentence. No address — only a date; and scribbled with pencil.

"Dear Miss Davoren,—I have had to run up to town for a few days. Dicky remains behind, and has commissioned me to bring back a small fowling-piece belonging to Mr. Shea. I shall call for it on Monday, if not inconvenient to you.

"Very faithfully yours,

"J. O'Rooney Hogan."

Not much, after all — very little indeed. And this inconsistent damsel, who had been so astonished to receive a letter at all from her admirer, found herself wondering he did not say more when he was about it. But then, if he is coming on this absurd business, he no doubt thought it better to keep all his news to tell it in person. And a bright rosy colour flew up to the young lady's face as she

reflected on the fact that this gentleman—a barrister, on the point of becoming a member of Parliament—was coining such a ridiculous excuse for calling to see her. What would Dorothy say? And she got up and stood before the mirror, and smoothed back her ripply hair, thinking what she should say to him and how receive him. She forgot breakfast altogether until a maid put her head in and awoke her young mistress out of the land of day-dreams by demanding a second cup of tea for Mrs. Davoren. Then she ran downstairs again, and took her seat at the table. She had finished her own breakfast, and having given the maid what she asked, she remained sitting quite still for a little time, feeling with one hand in her pocket the letter which she had received.

Certainly she had not expected it. He had asked leave, that night that he came out to see Dicky, to come and see them again, and to tell them the news of the election and all his adventures in the south; but he had not said a word about writing. And she went over in her memory every word and look of his, as in truth she had often done since that memorable evening. She ended by making a resolve

in her own mind—a resolve that, to tell the truth, was but a half-hearted one—that she would treat his note literally, and take the visit as purely and simply a matter of business. Dicky very naturally wanted the fowling-piece; and what more natural than that Mr. Hogan should offer to bring it to him? In fact, it was just like Dicky's carelessness not to write for it himself. Then she went out to the hall, and looked at the gun, hanging, with the fishing-rods and other things of the kind, at the end. It wanted cleaning sadly. The thought flashed into her head that perhaps she ought to have it sent to Mr. Hogan's address. It would certainly save him the trouble of coming out; and he must have so much to do. Then the note was again read over: "I shall call for it on Monday." This was Saturday morning; there was plenty of time; and she certainly would have the fowling-piece put in order and sent to Mr. Hogan's office. And with this Spartan resolution Miss Davoren went to the kitchen, for her usual morning consultation with the cook; this over, she busied herself with sundry and various household duties until midday; then she

usually went to her mother's room, to sit with her and read aloud, or sew if the invalid were inclined to sleep. In the afternoon she might have to see a visitor, if such chanced to come their way, or to practise; or take a walk if inclination or the weather tempted. She generally spent Saturdays in town; she was wont to go to confession at Gardiner's Street chapel, where most of the Dublin young ladies congregate on that day. Then Dorothy generally expected to see her at two o'clock to lunch; and so the whole day, from twelve until late in the afternoon, was usually spent in the city.

This Saturday would be a busy day with Nellie. She had to be ready in time for the one o'clock train, and it was nearly twelve when she had finished her morning tasks. However, she reached Gardiner's Street by taking a cab across town, and, after an interval of preparation, an obliging friend, a sister penitent, gave her her "turn" at Father O'Hea's box. The chapel was very full: it was the Saturday before the first Sunday of the month; and the rows of benches drawn up at the sides of the innumerable confessionals were all crowded—as usual, in the proportion of

ninety-nine women to one man. Girls, school-girls, young ladies, young-old ladies (the most pious of all), and old ladies, thronged and squeezed and elbowed, and cast looks like daggers on every daring wight who presumed to borrow a "turn" from some one near the box, instead of waiting patiently at the tail of the long files on each side until all who had come before her were "heard" and had taken their departure. The Raffertys and Mary Brangan were high up, and smiled amiably at Nellie. Mary Brangan was rather down-cast in manner, and when Nellie had taken her place beside her whispered in doleful tone,—

"I wonder is Father O'Hea in good-humour to-day. Oh dear! what 'll I do if he's not? I've got such a confession pain."

"Have you? Oh, dear! do you get them? I never do."

"Laws! don't you? I've been dancing fast again: what 'll I do? Say a prayer for me that I'll find him good-humoured. Oh! I'll be killed. Last time I got it awful from him; he said if I did it again he wouldn't give me absolution."

All this Miss Brangan whispered under her

fingers, which she held so as to turn her voice into her neighbour's ear. In her other hand she held a huge scarlet-and-gold-bound "Key of Heaven," stuffed full of holy pictures and markers.

"I don't think fast dancing a sin; and my confessor told me if I didn't I needn't confess it. I don't think it is, at all."

"What! did Father O'Hea tell you that? Then I won't confess it, either!"

"I have more than one reason for my opinion, Miss Brangan; and besides, I never was bound, as you were, not to fast dance. Now, please do not follow my example: I'm sorry I told you."

"You needn't. I have to go out a great deal; and what's the use of going to a dance and sitting still? And besides, I hate quadrilles. Oh laws! there, he's called off now to the house. We'll have to wait an age."

A man-servant had crossed the chapel from the door leading to the priest's house, and tapping on the confessional, called away the confessor to see some one who had sent for him. The double row of penitents cast disappointed glances after him, for they would pro-

bably have to wait an additional hour or more. Miss Brangan looked rather relieved; she turned to Nellie and whispered something in her ear; then both ladies rose, and leaving their prayer-books on the seat in token of their return, passed out of the main door and down the steps into the street.

"We may as well wait here awhile," said Miss Brangan, drawing a long breath. "I'm expecting to meet a cousin of mine. Did you see Miss Rafferty and young Mr. Dooly on Sunday? They were on the Pier; and I'm told the mar'ge is to come off after Lent. I met them all at the ball last night; and oh, Miss Davoren, that gentleman—what's his name? the young bar'ster, I mean—Mr. Hogan, was expected, but he couldn't come. Ah! wouldn't you have been sorry if you were there, eh?"

"Not a bit, Miss Brangan. I can't imagine how or why I should."

"Don't be vexed: I know he admired you greatly. I met him a while ago, sure—I nearly forgot to tell you (this with a palpable exhilaration of tone and look)—walking in Nassau Street with a lady. She was beau-

tifully dressed—oh! be-yeu-tifly: navy blue silk and pale blue; and she'd lovely golden hair. She wasn't young, though, at all."

"Ah! was there an old lady very like her, and dressed in sealskin and black."

"Yes, exactly. They were Protestants, I'm sure; for I could hear their accents, and they looked like it."

"No doubt," said Miss Nellie, quite carelessly. She divined at the first word, almost, that Miss Bursford was the beautifully dressed lady—the pale, blonde girl whom she had met at Cousin Dorothy's. Walking with her! the very same day that—— And she determined now that that gun should be sent, without fail, on Monday morning to his office. Diana Bursford—beautifully dressed: and she pictured Hogan's pleasant face smiling into hers as he walked beside her; proud, no doubt, to be seen with Miss Bursford. Why not? and the girl's cheek grew the least shade paler for an instant only. She dismissed the envious thought from her mind (it was merely envious) without an effort, and not without a twinge of self-upbraiding for having harboured it.

Miss Brangan's cousin came up now, ac-

companied by Miss Eily Rafferty and the pious Miss Doyle. The young ladies entered into conversation.

"Mary Doyle!" said Miss Brangan; "what are you comin' for to-day again? Weren't you at confession on Wednesday?"

"Yes; but I wanted to ask Father McQuaide's leave to employ Miss Feathers, the dressmaker; she's a Protestant, you know, and I couldn't think of giving her anything to do till I knew whether he'd approve it."

"Listen, then," said Miss Eily Rafferty; "here's a wrinkle for *you*, Mary Doyle. Did any of ye hear this story? Mother Paul told it to mamma last day she was visiting at St. Swithin's. There was a young lady, a great friend of her own (so now it must be true), livin' on the Laracore Road, just out that way a bit towards Green Lanes; and she was most anxious to get settled. Do ye mind how a nun never says 'get married,'—it is always *settled* they call it—ho! ho!" and Miss Eily giggled irreverently. "Well, the girl began a novena to Saint Joseph; and the ninth day, when the novena was done, and nobody turned up to marry her, she flew in a rage, and says she to

Saint Joseph, 'Old boy, you've been here long enough,' says she—'and out you go!' An', me dear, what do you think but she opened the window, and she hurls the imidge plump into the street! 'Tis a fact! Well, a gentleman was passin' by, an' he saw the white thing fallin' down, an', me dear, he caught it, and he came up and knocked at the hall door. Well, her mother was in the hall; an' of course, the least thing she could do in mere politeness was to ask him in. Then, the girl she comes down, an', me dear, her mother introduced her, an' they were married in a month. So now!"

"Laws!" said Mary Doyle, opening her eyes and her mouth as far as they would go.

"Musha, then!" said Miss Brangan the sensible; "I think they were badly off for men in that house. I wouldn't be her—no! indeed! Would you, Miss Davoren?"

But Miss Davoren was laughing too much to be able to answer the question; and after a few minutes' delay, the party separated and repaired to their respective confessionals.

When Nellie got away it was too late to think of going to Dorothy; moreover she did not feel

inclined for the long journey across town; so, having made some necessary purchases, she returned by one of the afternoon trains.

The Sunday passed uneventfully. A note came from Miss O'Hegarty to ask why she had not seen Nellie the previous day, and to announce that she would call on Monday. Nellie was glad of this for several reasons: firstly, she wanted to see Dorothy; and secondly, her presence, and the stir she always created when she came, would prevent any mental tergiversations or useless regrets on her part, such as she knew herself liable to fall into, once that the white heat of determination had cooled down,—and which she determined to strive against.

So on Monday morning the gun was sent, with a polite message of thanks, to Mr. Hogan; and Miss Nellie went through all her duties with a somewhat unusual vigour. Lunch was prepared for Dorothy; and two hours' vigorous practice at the piano concluded by two o'clock, at which hour that lady was expected. Whatever delayed her, it was half-past three ere she appeared. By that time Mrs. Davoren was asleep, and could not

be disturbed; so Miss O'Hegarty seated herself in the dining-room with Nellie.

"I couldn't get away any earlier, my dear. Peter is in one of his tantrums—says he'll leave on the first of next month; and he spent two hours this morning packing his trunk. Really, I'm wearied with him."

Nellie with difficulty restrained a laugh. Peter gave notice, on an average, once a fortnight; but the idea of the trunk-packing was something extraordinarily ludicrous—the trunk, according to Dicky, being a pure myth. Dicky had once upon a time penetrated the garret where this wonderful piece of furniture was kept, or was supposed to be kept; and declared ever after that the trunk was not in existence, and never had been, any more than Mrs. Gamp's Mrs. Harris.

"Why don't you take him at his word, Cousin Dorothy? I would, and have done with him. You would get an excellent servant for his wages."

"'Deed, my dear, I think I will. Mrs. Hepenstall has often wanted me to take their man Kirk; they want to do with the page-boy only, now that they have him trained

and in on their ways, she says. How she could endure a gammon (*gamin*) of that sort about her, I don't know. I'd just as soon take in the organ-man's monkey. He's English, too."

"She brought him over with her, then?"

"She did; and indeed she was telling me, after she got him, that she was lecturing him one day on not allowing anything to be wasted, and how she'd value him if he was economical. 'Waste, mum!' said this page boy; 'lor, no, mum: sooner than 'ave anything wasted, I'm sure I eats till I nigh busts.' The Hepenstalls wanting to get rid of the man looks as if they were not getting on all too well. Poor Charlotte!" sighed Miss Dorothy, "she has a fast husband, I fear. What are men coming to nowadays? I was at the Griffiths' the other day; and she looked that miserable and woe-begone: their son in college is a dreadful boy, and Judge Griffiths such a nice, steady man. It is incomprehensible to me."

"It seems to me very clear indeed, then," said Nellie, a little sharply. "Boys are allowed to do what they like and go where they

choose. From the day our Dicky went to school he has been his own master altogether; and indeed, Cousin Dorothy, he refuses to tell even where he has been when he comes in. He goes out in the morning to college; he doesn't come back till dinner-time. In the evening he goes out again. Mamma and I scarcely ever see him at all; and he won't go with me anywhere hardly, except by the greatest coaxing. Papa never minds anything, you know."

"Well, you see, my dear, he's getting to be a young man now; and they won't be controlled and questioned. Boys must all go through that stage: it makes them hardy and manly to be left to themselves; and then they learn the world."

"Learn the world! Well, Cousin Dorothy, look at all the young men who learn the world. Tad Griffiths is learning it. His eldest brother killed himself in the process, no doubt. And there is young Grey, the clergyman's son here, who enlisted last year, after getting himself expelled from college. The Miss Greys have not one of their brothers to take them about. They say they can't get them to go into

society; they hate girls, and it's all humbug, and slow. Every night they are out; never in their father's house except for meals."

"It is a fact," said Miss O'Hegarty thoughtfully. "In my time men were just as wild—wilder! Look at the stories of their doings! Somehow they didn't begin so young then, whatever's the reason; and it was a different kind of wildness. Practical jokes, and fighting, and hard drinking, and that. They have a quieter style of sowing their wild oats nowadays; and, indeed, it is a deal a more mischievous one. Fashion, my dear,—it is the fashion."

Fashion was the final court of appeal with Miss O'Hegarty in all doubtful cases, and by its decisions she abided faithfully. She never troubled herself about their justice; expediency with her was the equivalent. She was not in the habit of looking deeply into things; indeed, she seldom stirred the surface at all, and pronounced off-hand judgments on the first aspects of cases with a dogmatism and decision truly wonderful. We must do her the justice to say that this rule did not hold good in politics. She never relaxed a fibre of her Toryism, and had not a whit of that latent

chameleon nature which becomes apparent in people even of the best set, on the changes of administrations. All Whigs were Radicals with her. The hybrid Conservative-Whig and the Liberal-Tory were impossibilities, and as such ignored and scouted.

"By-the-bye, Nellie, to-morrow I'm going to a concert for this Asylum. Mr.—ah—what's his name?—that great friend of the Bursfords, Saltasche—has found out some splendid *pianiste*, an officer's wife, living up somewhere near the Park; and he and his friends have taken her up. It's a Protestant affair, but if you like I'll take you; I can easily get tickets."

"No, thank you, Cousin Dorothy; I could not go. You know we are forbidden to attend any of those entertainments. Tell me, is her name Poignarde?—a very young, pretty woman? I think Dicky spoke of having met her with the Greys."

"Yes, that's the very name. I never do remember those foreign names; but I'm told her playing is something divine. The husband is a fearful scamp; and the Greys are very kind to her. You might as well come, child."

Just as Nellie was about to reply a loud knock at the door startled her. Mr. Hogan's knock!—she thought it must be Mr. Hogan's knock; and in spite of her efforts to remain composed, she could not prevent her surprise showing itself.

"Who's that, Nellie?" asked Miss O'Hegarty sharply. "Had we not better go into the drawing-room?"

"I know who it is; at least, I am sure it is Mr. Hogan. He was to call here for something to take down to Dicky in Peatstown; and—and——"

But by this time they were at the door of the room, and further explanation was impossible. There indeed stood the candidate for Peatstown, looking as bright and fresh as possible. He was presented to Miss O'Hegarty, and bowed low to her, recognizing the lady who had been Nellie's chaperone at the theatre the evening they met there.

Cousin Dorothy guessed intuitively the whole affair, and was more cordial than was her wont, considering who her new acquaintance was. She seated herself on an ottoman, and scanned him as curiously as politeness would allow.

Nellie began in a slightly nervous tone.

"It was too—too much trouble for Dicky to burden you with his gun, Mr. Hogan. I sent it to your office this morning. Did you get it?"

Had Miss Davoren's cousin not been present, Mr. Hogan would have said the truth—that he did receive the gun and the message between ten and eleven o'clock; but, with his usual caution, he reflected that the admission would certainly entail the inference by the clever-looking old lady, whose grey eyes were fixed upon him so scrutinizingly, that he had come to pay a visit to the young lady of the house. So he answered composedly,—

"No, Miss Davoren; I had left before its arrival. I did hear since, indeed, that my servant had been looking for me with a message of some kind." And this mendacious gentleman looked at her to see if her expressive countenance betrayed any disappointment. On the contrary, she looked intensely relieved—and was so too. She dreaded being rallied by Miss Dorothy; and she had also some undefined dislike to being talked of in connection with any man. However proud she might feel, the idea that Miss

Brangan and her set should ever discuss her, as they were now discussing other girls, was unbearable. Her dislike of the particular kind of current small-talk known as "chaff" was something morbid in its intensity. Hitherto it had been very easy for her to avoid the bantering of her friends, for she found the ordinary "young gentlemen" of her acquaintance so uninteresting that even the simplest conversation was difficult; and they, however they admired her, were afraid to show any marked preference to one so cold and distant in her manner.

Miss O'Hegarty, having surveyed him well, now began to speak to the young man.

"I see by the *Beacon* that you are standing for Peatstown in opposition to Lord Kilboggan's nephew."

"Yes. I am contesting the seat in the Liberal interest," he replied, a little pompously.

"Does your canvassing go on well?" asked Nellie anxiously, and a little cordially, as if inclined to counterbalance the old lady's patronizing tone.

"Oh yes, so far satisfactorily. It won't be a

very close contest. I have had hard work; but I think the most wearing part of the work is the journeys up and down by rail. I had an American—a most extraordinary man, a perfect question-machine — for travelling-companion on Saturday. He did so annoy me."

The old lady smiled mischievously. "Was he catechising you on your political creed, Mr. Hogan? What tiresome creatures one does encounter in travelling!"

Her first allusion to his affairs was coupled with the mention of the *Beacon*—a paper which had recently made a savage onslaught on the Home Rulers generally, and on the progress of the Peatstown election and the candidate and his platform in particular. Hogan was keenly alive to the implied sarcasm of the second speech; but he ignored it by a literal interpretation, and replied quite unconsciously,—

"Well—ah—he did not confine himself to any one subject. The number of questions was fully paralleled by their diversity: he went from statistics to topography, geology, and zoology—everything that possibly could be dragged in; and kindly informed me that I was greatly behind his countrymen, insomuch

that I was not conversant with the mineral productions of Tipperary."

"Are they not wonderful creatures, now?" said Miss O'Hegarty. "Perfectly wonderful! I never could endure them. One meets such a dreadful set of them abroad."

"Ah! well; but you don't find better-class Americans, Miss O'Hegarty, making themselves so objectionable. You mustn't take the shoddy specimens as representatives."

"Nonsense!" replied Dorothy, with a most aggravating air of superiority. "They are all alike: isn't it a Republic? Manners must be the same with everybody where there are no class distinctions. They have no aristocracy. Fine dress seems to be their sole idea of refinement. Faugh!"

"They have an aristocracy of intellect," put in Nellie.

"Nothing of the sort, child," said Dorothy, almost angrily. "What literature have they, indeed?"

"They have ours—which they take without paying for it," laughed Hogan.

"They've none of their own," continued Miss O'Hegarty. "No, none. What great

poets or prose writers have they? They can't call Longfellow a national poet. There is no American epic—no history——"

"Epic, eh? Well, I think the real American epic is Barnum's autobiography. The genius of the nation is best expressed in that. Ha, ha!"

"What is Dicky doing?" asked Nellie; "and when may he be expected home?"

"Well, Miss Davoren, he is canvassing: that is, he takes pleasant country drives with the young ladies of the house, and seems to do a great deal of work indeed. He is remarkably clever."

Miss O'Hegarty, with whom her young relative was an especial favourite, smiled on hearing the encomium pronounced by Hogan; and in a pleasanter tone of voice asked him when he was to return to Peatstown.

"To-morrow. Then I do not come back here until after the election."

Miss O'Hegarty would hear nothing of the election. She casually brought in the name of a prominent Conservative peer, as being interested in the result, on account of his cousin the candidate—showing that she was

retained on the other side. So the conversation shifted to indifferent topics; and after a stay of twenty minutes he rose to go. He felt sorry he had not sent a note acknowledging Miss Davoren's attention, instead of coming in person. However, when Nellie placed her hand in his, and looking straight into his eyes, thanked him—a little tell-tale colour dyeing her cheeks the while, and a brighter light shining in her fine eyes—for his kindness and attention, he thought that, after all, his visit had not been bootless; and he pressed her hand ever so little as he left the room. He had accurately gauged her before—that is, as much of her character as it behoved him to know: to wit, that she was not, like most of the other women of his limited acquaintance, business-like husband-hunters, admiration-mongers,—turning, like sunflowers in quest of every ray, their beauties to all eyes. Neither could it be said of her, as a witty Castle aide-de-camp said of some of the Corporation ladies, that she bore "the mark of the Beast." Her face and style were eminently Protestant: even in London society, he thought to himself, there could not be found a trace of "Dissenting

appearance" in her. Good blood!—her mother came of the Rathbone and Desmond families: nothing like it! And Mr. Hogan reflected with great self-satisfaction on his own maternal ancestor, that royal prince of the ninth century, the founder of the O'Rooney family. Not, indeed, that he had ever cared to claim the kinship; he had rather affected to laugh at the idea; but of late he had noticed the tide seemed to be setting in favour of such appendages. The Raffertys had got home a genealogical tree from Sir Bernard Burke; the Ryans wrote themselves down O'Ryan; and Donnell, the retired wine-merchant, who bought Lord Ramines' patrimony, insisted on the prefix Mac. There was great talk of the septs and tribes; and sundry extinct peerages seemed to be only waiting for moneyed claimants to come forward. Hitherto he had overlooked the fact that his ancestry might be of service. His profession and his success had sufficed as a patent of respectability; but the pedigree would undoubtedly be an addition indirectly, for as the Bishop had often told him, "The only chance of respect and consideration from the Protestants, you

being a Roman Catholic, is to let them see that you have both from your own people." So he determined that the chieftain Rhuadne, and that the ruined Castle Rhuadne, near Tara, should both be skilfully introduced as a background, so to say, to the representation of the family O'Rooney—the composition, consisting only of the Bishop and himself, seeming a little bald and crude. It was not an absurdity; it was a means to an end. He had set to build a mansion to himself; and he had fixed the top stone of the building first,—a well-paid and lofty government situation, to be the reward of Parliamentary services,—to render which services a seat in Parliament must be attained, which seat in Parliament must be obtained by——any means. "*De minimis non curat Lex*": he used to repeat that quotation frequently to himself,—not that he derived much mental comfort from it, or that he distinguished very clearly the difference between the broad elastic margins of the Lex and the close, fine-drawn distinctions of the inner tribunal, which he much seldomer invoked.

As he drove back to town, he debated within

himself the desirability of calling on Miss Bursford. He had, indeed, sent her a note from Peatstown, to say that everything was going on well with him,—a note couched in such terms that neither answer nor acknowledgment was needful, but which had nevertheless been answered; and it was this answer that made him hesitate as to paying her another visit.

"Better leave it till we go to London," thought he. "Safer—much safer, and more to the purpose;" and he did leave the visit till then.

CHAPTER XII.

"HAMLET.—You would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass, and there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ, yet cannot you make it speak."

Hamlet.

"WELL, Cousin Dorothy," said Miss Davoren after the departure of Mr. Hogan, "shall we go back to the other room. Perhaps I ought to go up and see if mamma is awake."

"Never mind, my dear, yet a bit. And so that is your friend Mr. Hogan? Quite a nice, gentlemanlike man." And the veteran turned round her wide grey eyes full on Miss Nellie's ingenuous countenance. "Diana Bursford,—what was she saying? She's met him, I know, somewhere."

"He knows Miss Bursford. I heard he was seen walking with her the other day." This was ungenerously said; but when an

ostrich is minded to stick its head in the sand it is never too particular.

"Humph! walking with her indeed! Diana really goes to the fair with absurdity now-a-days. Surely she knows the man is a Romanist. Absurd!—and she is ten years older than him. Where did you meet him?"

"I told you, Cousin Dorothy: at the Raffertys' ball."

"Oh, ah! last November. Dicky or you were telling me. I know now, to be sure; that Saltasche man has brought him out."

"That Saltasche man" was one of Miss O'Hegarty's pet aversions. When she took a dislike to any one she was sure to make the fact known by the very way she pronounced their name; and as the disagreeable cognomen passed her lips now, her thin nostrils curled, and her under-lip shaped the word ominously. "Depend upon it they are chums—birds of a feather. I never could endure these mere adventurers."

"Adventurers, Cousin Dorothy!" Nellie's eyes opened wide. "Why, Mr. Saltasche owns a splendid place just behind us; and I have heard papa say he was worth fifty thou-

sand pounds. To be sure, he is not Irish—or at least, he is only a half foreigner? And surely you do not consider Mr. Hogan that? You don't include him?"

"Tush! my dear, you don't understand. Of course Mr. Hogan is not one in the sense that Mr. Saltasche is; and, indeed, if he is an adventurer in any other sense, it is quite as much other people's faults as his own."

Miss Nellie, indeed, was far from following the working of her relative's mind; and she was content to leave the speech a mystery, and not to beat her brains over the solution. She quite understood Miss Dorothy's carpings at Diana—their bearing was plain enough; but the criticisms on Hogan were surely uncalled for. She saw no flaw in him.

"I forgot to mention that Dermot—Dermot Blake, my nephew—has been heard of. He has been away since he was a lad; travelling ever since he left college. Did you ever see him, Nellie?"

"No; I think I heard you speak of him, and that he was to be home when he was five-and-twenty."

"Yes; though indeed it's ten years now

since he was five-and-twenty. I never was on terms with the Blakes; however, he'll be home next year. That will be a catch for somebody: three thousand a year! He's at the Cape now."

But Nellie was staring into the fire, thinking of some one who was far from Dermot Blake and the Cape, and wondering should she see him again, and when. How she wished Dorothy would go up to her mother's room, so that she might think over his coming, and the manner of it, and everything, quietly by the fireside! Dorothy had been so stiff and so sarcastic; but what was the use of thinking of that? It was always her way.

"Dermot is like the Blakes," Dorothy talked away: "tall and brown—fine man, and such a good, warm-hearted fellow! Who will he marry? The accumulations—at least, the accumulations there ought to be," she added in a dubious tone, "would clear off the estate entirely. He ought to marry money. Yes, he ought to marry money."

"Ought he?" repeated Miss Nellie, dreaming still, and seeing in the wood-ashes in the grate a droll likeness of Mr. Hogan in his barrister's wig.

"Run away, and see if your mother be awake, child; I must be going," said Cousin Dorothy, pulling out the great diamond-set watch that had belonged to Desmond O'Hegarty, the last of the family. "Dear bless us!—a quarter to six. I'll be half an hour late for my dinner; and that Peter like a fiend already. I declare: the martyrdom I undergo with that creature! There, the other day, I told him to go and get himself a new hat; and just as he always does when I desire him to buy himself any new things, he comes and asks me, '*Will I get a hat to fit meself or to fit anybody, marm?*'—as if he was thinking of leaving, you know. So says I, 'Oh, you'd better get a hat to fit *anybody*, Peter,'—never meaning him to take me up; and the ojous old wretch goes and buys a hat as big as a wheelbarrow, just to spite me: so he did. To see him yesterday, with it rattling about on his head, it would vex a saint, it would. Talk of Job, indeed! I'd like to have set Job up with a couple of family servants of the real old style! Dermot Blake, now, he and Peter always got on together; perhaps when he settles down he'd take Peter off my hands.

You have no idea how smart Peter can be! I declare now, I don't know anybody would suit Dermot's house so well."

"That Saltasche man," as Miss O'Hegarty scornfully styled him, had not been idle since we last saw him. He had skilfully extracted the somewhat biassed, if comprehensive, history of her relatives the Poignardes from Mrs. Grey. They were not relatives in the strict sense of the word—merely connections. Poignarde, indeed, was scarcely a creditable appendage to any family; and his strange wife, however beautiful and talented, was so cold and reserved and odd, that the clergyman's wife, busy and worn with her large and troublesome family, had neither time nor inclination to make friends with her. Mr. Saltasche had managed very cleverly, as he did always, to impress Mrs. Grey with the belief that he was desirous to secure the services of Mrs. Poignarde as *pianiste* for the concert in which she had a particular interest; and he sent his sister, a lady somewhat older than himself, who managed his house and always lived with him, to call on Mrs. Poignarde with Mrs. Grey. This point secured, he devoted himself,

heart and soul, to make the charitable undertaking, as it was called, a social success. Mr. Saltasche set great store on popularity, and prided himself on holding the most amicable relations with everybody, irrespective of creed or class. He had all that off-handed, ready way of talking and giving, that goes so far with the lower orders of Irish people; and the labourers and poor folks of Green Lanes exalted him to the very highest pitch. If his swarthy countenance appeared in the window of a train, every porter made a dash at the door of his carriage. His parcels found a score of bearers to fight for the honour of carrying them; and the jarveys could see no one else beckon until Mr. Saltasche had selected his conveyance. His dinners were pronounced to be the acme of perfection; and the company was always as well assorted and selected as the *menu*. Strange to say, nevertheless, it was in his own immediate neighbourhood, precisely where he expended his best efforts and a vast income to attain the good-will of every one, that his enemies were keenest. There was a class of Protestants—not the best set, nor the second set, but still

a very respectable and old-established faction—who stoutly denied Saltasche's supremacy, and would have none of him. "A half-foreigner," "a fellow come from God knows where," "a mongrel:" they even declared him to be a free-thinker. And one gentleman, who, on the strength of avowed atheism, had acquired a sort of reputation for general information, if not erudition, imparted, under the seal of secrecy, to his most particular friends his opinion that Saltasche was a Comtist.

Whatever he was, he was able to snap his fingers at the clique the night of the concert, when the schoolroom, hung with red cloth and decorated with splendid exotics from his own hothouses, was crowded with the *élite* of his friends—Lord Brayhead, the Bragintons, Bursfords, Hepenstalls, Wyldoates—military men innumerable—in attendance on the pretty O'Haras and Dillons. Everybody was in full dress; and the best amateurs in Dublin had been secured as performers. The prime mover, although ostensibly only one of the committee, Mr. Saltasche was everywhere at once. He received Lord Brayhead at the door, and conducted him to the place of honour—a

red velvet chair on a raised step beneath the platform, oppressively close to the singers and musicians, but still in sight of all the audience and most conspicuous in every way. Beside his lordship were chairs occupied by his relatives the Misses Braginton and the rest of the daïs company. A glass door led to a room where the performers were congregated together. A singing doctor, high in favour at the vice-regal court, and a lawyer who had "fiddled himself" (so the story went) into a fine position in the law courts; a tenor captain, and a basso major, both from the Linenhall barracks; a buffo singer of rare excellence, by profession an attorney; and a number of ladies all congregated together, talking, humming airs, and otherwise killing time until the bell rang for the commencement. Such was the assemblage that greeted Mr. Saltasche's pleased eyes as he dived through the glass door to muster his company.

"Everybody's in now. Stukely, my dear boy, you lead off. Chorus! everything's ready. Where's Mrs. Poignarde? Is she here?" His eyes had already satisfied themselves that she was not.

"Mrs. Poignarde has not appeared," said Diana Bursford; "but I think I heard some one come into the outer hall just now."

Mr. Saltasche sent off the first detachment to sing a glee, and passed quietly out by the side-door to see if Mrs. Poignarde had come. In the dressing-room he heard a stir, and tapped at the door gently.

No answer. He turned the handle and looked in cautiously: the gas was half turned down, and the brilliant well-piled fire filled the room with a mellow, fitful light. On a foot-stool drawn close to the grate he saw a slender figure crouched, holding out both white-gloved hands to shield her face from the glare. A long wave of white froth-like texture streamed backwards. She looked like some fairy visitor in the ugly room, with its prosaic rows of benches and map-hung walls.

She never moved. He bent forward, and then closing the door, advanced quietly.

"Mrs. Poignarde! I half imagined you were deserting us at the last moment."

"Ah! did you?" and she stood in a moment erect before him. "No, no; I came with Miss Saltasche. But why did you think that?

Because I am not there? I don't want to go with them. To play well I need to be quiet—to think; so I stayed here until my turn came. Do you mind? tell me: do you? Tell me: do you?" she repeated, in a sweet half-tone, lowering her voice almost caressingly, and looking at him from beneath the drooped white eyelids. There was a charming dependingness and timidity in the tone and look—something so different from the reserved coldness of her usual manner—that it went straight through him like a flash. A bright light came in his eyes, fixed on hers searchingly and triumphantly.

"You will do as you please. You know very well it is for you to command us all." And he leaned forward and touched the gas jets above their heads, letting a broad glare of light fall upon the slender figure beside him. She looked exquisitely lovely—so white and graceful: the long robes falling in soft wreaths behind her gave a look of height and dignity to her figure. A narrow gold collar clasped with a diamond circled her throat; and the soft plaits of her hair, dressed in defiance of the fashion, hung low on her neck, contrasting with its ivory whiteness.

He longed for the moment to come when he should walk out past the crowd with her on his arm, and appropriate to himself all the praise and delighted raptures of the audience. She was his property, a gem of his discovery; and they were indebted to him for the treat. He would take her, after her first piece, to Lord Brayhead, and present her to him as a personal friend of his own and a distinguished *artiste*, needing only his lordship's approval to stamp her as one of the first stars of the firmament. The Bragintons would patronize her, or try to do so, and burn their fingers in the process; and every one would be on the *qui vive* to know who she was.

She did not seem to hear what he said; she had turned aside, and was thoughtfully looking into the fire, remembering half-sorrowfully, half-bitterly, the last time she had played before an audience, at the breaking-up of the school in Kensington. It seemed only yesterday: the hot July afternoon, the trees waving outside; the close room, and all the people; and Eric Poignarde, then a dragoon officer, bowing before her, the South American heiress. That was a fatal day indeed!

The transient flush of excitement that had come upon her when Mr. Saltasche entered the room had died away; and the old bitter, constrained mood, like an ever-present sense of soreness, returned. She repented her promise, and wished herself, were it possible, back in the dingy lodging at Inchicore. What had she to do among these staring strangers—curious and indifferent, if not scornful? She hated them already. Stupid, cold wretches: what were they to her? And she turned round impatiently, only to meet the ardent eyes of Saltasche still fixed upon her. Suddenly he remembered himself, and looking at his watch, said,—

"Tell me, Mrs. Poignarde: what would you like to do—to remain here alone, until I come for you? or will you join the performers?"

"I shall remain here," said she decisively, "if it is possible; pray don't let me keep you." She spoke petulantly, and he had no choice but to go.

In a few minutes he was back: it was her turn to play; and taking his arm, she passed out of the glass-door and up the steps into the concert-room.

A buzz ran round immediately, and curious heads were bent forward. Opera-glasses were in requisition. "Is it Miss Bursford? No! no! A mysterious *prima donna*, imported by that Monte Christo of a Saltasche specially for the occasion. Foreign, of course. Jewess. The colour is Jewish—that dead white, you know."

So the knots of men leaning against the door and the walls murmured to each other, until the musician, seating herself at the piano, struck into one of Liszt's most masterly compositions. Saltasche had taken care that the instrument should not be unworthy of the performer. The extraordinary difficulties of the composition seemed nothing to the lissom white fingers, that flew over the keys and produced such wonderful depths of tone with so little apparent effort. The charm of the instrument and a sense of her own power, produced in her an unwonted exhilaration; and she played with a fire and spirit that astonished even herself. Saltasche was in an ecstasy. He refused to allow her to play an *encore*, and led her up to the noble patron to present her to him before the whole room. Sundry spiteful tongues were silenced by this planned

manœuvre. A chair was forthcoming beside one of the Bragintons; who immediately commenced, after polite and approving thanks, a characteristic conversation.

"How *enormously* you must have practised! You do play so exquisitely: quite as well as Lady St. Elmo. Don't you think Mrs. Poignarde plays quite as well as Lady St.——"

"Oh dear, yes; quite," returned the lady addressed, who had never heard the performer in question in her life. "Exquisite touch, and such—such—ah—*expression*, you know! How you *must* have practised, Mrs. Poignarde! All day long, no doubt?"

They all dwelt upon the same theme, so anxious were they to depreciate the too obvious merits of her achievements. By making it appear that she owed her proficiency merely to time and study, it would seem to prove that the same efforts on their part would have brought them up to her level. That was all that was necessary, of course.

"Oh yes," she answered, frankly; "I should be quite ashamed to tell you how much I practise." She read their thoughts

perfectly, and flashed an amused look at her mentor, standing near. He appreciated the situation, and said, approvingly,—

"Spoken like an *artiste*, Mrs. Poignarde; the general thing with ordinary performers is to try and make us believe that they never touch the piano at all. I never could see how the value of their music was affected by the statement."

"Never believe them," she said: "I know better; there is nothing in the world that requires more work than—playing,"—and she looked at the ladies with a smile at her own quip.

His lordship put on a solemn visage. He loved music no better than did the great lexicographer; he was old-fashioned, too, and had serious doubts as to the becomingness of ladies excelling in anything. It was not quite consistent with his prejudices; he had a dim idea that these sort of things were marketable commodities, bought and paid for, and that it was *infra dig.* for a lady or gentleman, as such, to meddle with professional pursuits. Although he had written a polemical work himself, he considered writing scarcely allow-

able; however, the appearance of certain of the nobility in print had of recent years rather unsettled his convictions on the subject. Then he was not sure who the musician was. She might have been a governess, or some "person" obliged to support herself. So he deemed it right to qualify his approval.

"Do you consider that music in itself repays or justifies the expenditure of so large a portion of our allotted time?"—and the long sheep's-face inclined sideways towards her. "Is it not open to question whether we are justified in encouraging trivialities that pass with time itself?"

Mrs. Poignarde looked at him, opening her wide brown eyes in genuine astonishment. She understood not one word of what he had said; but she divined in some way its import, from the edified expressions assumed by the women —the Bragintons especially. Miss Blanche seemed to be offering internally a thanks-giving that she, too, was not a musician, Mrs. Bursford came to the rescue.

"Do not overlook the parable of the talents, my lord," she said, with her sweetest smile; and a graceful gesture of the woman of the

world towards Adelaide Poignarde implied a patronizing compliment to her, and at the same time showed that she meant the discussion to be closed.

Scriptural allusions of this kind were perfectly admissible, and, indeed, were the predominant tone of the conversations of his lordship's *entourage.*

Some sudden thought made Saltasche watch the expression of his *protégée;* and he could have shouted with laughter on reading, clear as print, on her candid brow, utter unconsciousness of Mrs. Bursford's allusion. A song now occupied the attention of the circle; and Mrs. Poignarde had time to make up her mind as to her surroundings. What did they mean? That stupid old creature!—she felt sure she could not sit patiently in the room with him and these women. She understood them a little better, and determined to disobey her mentor and play encores for spite. She looked critically at them: Mrs. Bursford and Mrs. Hepenstall were neutrals; the little yellow-haired lady making such *moues* and *œillades* at the men, whom she was plainly keeping by main force around her, need not be counted

either, although she did look vicious when she found her attendants' eyes wandering to the strange lady in white. The Bragintons looked mischievous. Old?—yes, they were old, and made up very palpably indeed: rice-powdered, and with stippled-up eyebrows. And she ran her eye critically over those points, unnoticed; for their cousin, Diana Bursford, was singing in a quartette, and they could not spare a look, so eagerly were they listening for a flaw in the performance. She saw them exchange a smile and a glance at a badly-executed shake; and when the singers had retired, she said, tentatively,—

"Very nice song. I admire Mendelssohn so much: that lady in blue has the best voice there—so well trained!'

"Indeed! You think so?" The speaker was clearly disappointed. "The lady in blue will be glad to hear *your* opinion."

"Mrs. Poignarde," said Mr. Saltasche, "now, your turn will come again directly. Let's see: what is it? 'Woelfl's *Ne Plus Ultra* sonata,'" he read from the programme. "Very fine: but what do you say to substitute something lighter? What do you think? Come; you have a large *répertoire*, you know."

This proposal fell in with her humour completely; and she played a set of German waltzes so as to call down a storm of applause. She played three pieces before she left the piano,—finishing with a transcription of the "Flying Dutchman," by Liszt. Saltasche led her back to the waiting-room, amid a storm of applause.

"Give me my cloak: I am going," she said, peremptorily.

"Oh no! Surely not yet. You will play in the second part? Please tell me what has annoyed you,"— and he looked at her searchingly. She answered his eyes, as usual, listlessly and indifferently; the flush of excitement was gone.

"Nothing has annoyed me. I'm tired of it—that's all; and I hate those people. I don't want to see them again, any of them. Now let me go home."

He took her hand in his, and bent forward as if she were some wayward child.

"I only want to please you. You will do exactly what you like. Command me: but will you not tell me who has offended you?" He came nearer still, and looked entreatingly at her.

"I'll tell you about it another time, if you'll only let me go now. I am stifled in this place. No; I won't let you send for the brougham, or disturb your sister. I'll slip up to Vévey House by the side-door. I'll find it easily enough,—we came out that way."

When she got out into the night air, she drew a long breath of relief. It was bright and clear, and she could see far up the road under the dark lattice of the branches. She glided quietly along under the windows, through which came the voices of the singers distinctly; and passed unobserved through the groups outside. A dark hood and cloak covered her dress; and rejoicing in her escape, she walked quickly up the side lane leading to the garden door of Saltasche's residence.

She found the entrance without difficulty: a green door half hidden in the ivy, which grew luxuriantly all over the walls, and formed a winter shelter for innumerable birds. As she shut the door behind her, a couple of the feathered inhabitants, awakened, fluttered out helplessly, for a moment, in the darkness, but quickly returned to their resting-place. There was not a creature in the grounds, and the

house could not be seen for the evergreen trees and shrubs of the plantation. The green-houses had a cold, ghostly look in the moon-light; and a tiny breeze swept the dead leaves on the hedges with a shadowy rustle. She felt uncertain which way she should take, and she stood still for a moment, fancying that some sound might guide her to the house. She heard none; and as she looked around, her eyes fell on a rustic seat under an ash tree, whose long dry stems swept the ground. The whim entered her head to seat herself there for a few minutes. It was opposite the door, and there was every probability that some of the people of the house would pass. So she picked her way across the turf, and sat down to rest under the weeping ash. It was not cold—the night was only refreshingly cool; and everything round was clear and distinct as in the daylight. She threw back her hood, and let the breeze play on her brow, heated still, and drew long breaths of the night air. She leaned back in the seat, and recalled the concert-room she had just quitted, and the applause she had won. A vision of another concert-room, and another concert—that for which she was always

preparing, in the theatre of Rio—rose before her mind's eye. One more year, and she would be ready. If she could only get to Paris, to study a little under the great masters there! How these creatures applauded! but they were no test; and her lip curled scornfully. She longed to try her powers among the acknowledged stars of the musical world.

"Nearly as well as Lady who? That woman was talking of some player." She thought over the names of all the musicians she knew. She surpassed all the private ones she had ever met; but her experience was limited—as limited as her ambition was boundless. Now she heard steps in the lane without; in a moment the latchet clicked, and the unmistakable figure of Mr. Saltasche presented itself at the door. She never moved, in the hope that he would pass on unheeding. Not so: he perceived her almost instantaneously, and crossed the grass.

"How imprudent of you! I half feared you would do this. Why not have gone into the house?" He seated himself beside her. "Every one is speaking of you. Your playing is the most wonderful ever heard; and I have

been credited with bringing over a pupil of Rubinstein or Von Bülow."

"What! do they not know who I am?" And she turned sharp questioning eyes upon him. "Is it possible? I thought from the manner of those ladies——"

She had betrayed herself; and he was quick to seize his opportunity.

"What could you think? They don't know you at all. And moreover, they need never. Mrs. Grey——"

"Ah! then *you* know my history," she cried impulsively. "Mrs. Grey has told you all. Be it so, then!" And she rose to go: indignant and angry. All her blood revolted at the idea that the history of her early years was in the mouths of the women whose cold, envious eyes she now saw bent in scorn upon her. She was nervous and sensitive to a degree. She inherited, with her French blood, a morbid dread of ridicule, among other less questionable endowments; and the knowledge of her own fatal mistake was an ever-present torment to her. To get away from it was her dream—the hope of her life. Everything that could remind her of it she banished

out of sight; and yet it seemed to dog her footsteps everywhere. She bitterly regretted having yielded to the entreaties of Saltasche and Mrs. Grey, and vowed in her own mind that she never would see either of them again.

"Dear Mrs. Poignarde, listen to me for one moment. You mistake; you do indeed wrong me. See: let me explain."

He took her hand entreatingly; and she, but with a bad grace, consented to sit down. Watching her closely, he went on.

"You cannot have imagined me capable of intruding without a particular motive into your affairs. You blame Mrs. Grey wrongly—believe me. I do know your history, but not from her. Your husband and I have had business relations together; and long before I had seen you I had learned from his connections in London Captain Poignarde's history. It was necessary. Mrs. Grey has said—will say—nothing. Believe me, Mrs. Poignarde, you attach a foolish importance to mere trifles."

She did not reply. Her face was pale, and a strange contracted look came about her mouth. As he finished, she raised her eyes

and looked at him with a wondering, mournful gaze.

"Trifles!—mere trifles! Ah! that is all you know."

She clasped her hands together, and a shudder passed over her frame. The momentary weakness passed away; and she rose again to her feet, possessed now of but one idea—to make her escape, and never return. He, reading every thought, stood before her and barred the way.

"I tell you, Mrs. Poignarde, I know all,—all; believe me, for Heaven's sake! I am indeed your truest friend. Do you imagine me ignorant of your sufferings, your aspirations? I can help you, and I will. Let me."

She looked at him in amazement and distrust, and a wild hope shining in her eyes.

"Listen," Saltasche went on rapidly. "Your husband is on the brink of ruin. What are you to do when the crash comes? I know what you would do; but without assistance you are powerless. Is it not so? You have no friends, and his people take part against you?"

A mute gesture of despairing assent was the reply.

"Trust to me, Mrs. Poignarde; let me be your friend, your guide. We are of the same race; my father was a Brazilian. I will stand by you if you will only trust me, believe in me. A new life will open its doors to you, and all the past will be blotted out. Adelaide, speak!"

She did not reply, but she did not try to remove her hands from his grasp. Everything had become dark suddenly, and she felt a cold chill creep over her. The bare arms of the trees tossed menacingly in the breeze, and the rustle of the evergreens seemed so loud as to drown his words. He picked up her hooded cloak, and wrapped it round her. His hands were trembling, and his eyes met hers with a troubled, wild look: taking her hand, he placed it in his arm, and they walked a few steps onward, neither knowing where, in silence. He stopped suddenly, and faced her.

"Before returning I must know your decision. Will you accept my offer? Adelaide, poor child, will you refuse to let me help you? Look at me, Adelaide! Say only one word."

She placed her hand, cold and trembling, in his; and the two stood for a moment immov-

able and silent under the shadow of the beeches. Saltasche could not speak; his face was as pale as hers, and his heart beat so as almost to choke him. He drew her hand again beneath his arm, and holding it still, they reached the green gate.

"I must go back: I shall be missed. And do you return to the dressing-room, to the fireside there. If you do not wish to play again, you need not. It must be quite time I were back. You are content now? you accept my guidance?" And he looked into her beautiful eyes eagerly and triumphantly.

"Yes, I am content, if you will help me—to go home."

He raised her fingers to his lips, and pressing a kiss on them, left her abruptly and returned to the front hall. He gave his coat and hat to a servant of his own who was standing at the main door; and entering quietly and unobserved, joined a knot of talkers at the side for a moment or two. By degrees he made his way up to the top, and to his own seat near Lord Brayhead.

"You have been away, Mr. Saltasche,—out?" said some one, inquisitively.

"I have," he answered, composedly. "I was called away a little while ago. I see I didn't lose much time, though. You have not told me how you liked the *pianiste*, ladies."

He was instantly overwhelmed with opinions.

"Peculiar-looking little person—quite foreign style. Foreign style of playing, too," said Mrs. de Lancier, meaning thereby to convey a depreciation.

"So *very* good-natured; gives any amount of *encores*," sneered another, who, had the musician refused *encores*, would have declared her to have but a limited stock.

"Is she professional?" inquired the noble patron.

"Dear, no! an officer's wife, and belonging to a noble Brazilian family. Noble, I assure you. She was at one time reputed heiress to a couple of millions!"

So Mr. Saltasche enhanced the rarity of his black swan. The gentlemen were less critical, and their admiration was hearty and sincere. Several pressed for introductions; but he refused them, saying that Mrs. Poignarde had declined positively—in fact, had stipulated that she was not to have her privacy intruded upon.

She in fact declined all society. So he managed to put them off. Everything went off well. Lord Brayhead expressed himself delighted with the performance; and Saltasche, after accompanying his friends to the railway station, to see them off by the last train, returned home feeling that he had accomplished a good evening's work. The Fates had surely been propitious to him; and he trusted that, now the foundations of his plans were so well laid, no awkward hindrance would intervene to frustrate their success.

He lay for an hour in a comfortable easy-chair by his dressing-room fire, dreaming over his interview in the pleasure-grounds with Mrs. Poignarde. Rousing himself at last, he was about to go to bed, when a ring at the front door startled him. He guessed its import, and hurried down. At the door stood his confidential clerk Johns.

"A telegram, sir; and delayed by some accident nearly two hours. I brought it on, for fear anything might be wrong."

Saltasche had mastered its contents before the clerk had finished speaking. They ran as

follows,—the message being from Dicky Davoren at Peatstown :—

"Poll declared. Hogan eight fifty-seven, Wyldoates two thirty-one. Everything right. Coming up to-morrow."

CHAPTER XIII.

"O sacred hunger of ambitious mindes,
And impotent desire of men to raine!
Whom neither dread of God, that devils bindes,
Nor lawes of men, that common weales containe,
Nor bandes of nature, that wilde beastes restraine,
Can keep from outrage and from doing wrong,
Where they may hope a kingdom to obtaine."

The Faerie Queene.

It was with a strange feeling of elation and pride that Hogan leaped from the railway-carriage at Kingsbridge, to receive the greetings and congratulations of his friends, who, headed by the Bishop, were drawn up in waiting on the platform. There was a larger number of them than he had expected; indeed, a great many who before had ranked as mere acquaintance had lately enrolled themselves among the ranks of his best sympathisers.

Every one had been taken by surprise; and the unexpected exaltation of the young barrister was ascribed by most to the discrimi-

nation of the constituents, who so seldom alight on the wrong man or pass over deserving merit. The mystic letters which Mr. Hogan had now appended to his name stand for a great deal more than is commonly supposed. The politicians in general were delighted—taking his return as a proof of the depth and sincerity of the national feeling; and sundry well-known and tried warriors set to burnishing their armour for an assault on the Parliamentary fortress on the very first opportunity—shrewdly judging that if a nobody like Hogan had won his spurs thus easily, there must be golden prizes to be had for the trying.

The Bishop and some other influential friends had written to the candidate, offering to get up a public dinner—a banquet, in short—as a token of affection and esteem; but this had been declined by our hero, whose intention it was to get to London immediately, and to work. Mr. Saltasche and Lord Brayhead were positively waiting for his parliamentary services; and the railway bill was in actual danger. So, on the plea of want of time, he nipped the project in the bud.

Dicky and the Muldoons, father and son,

dined quietly with the member at the Melbourne. The party broke up early; the Muldoons being the first to leave. Dicky took himself home to Green Lanes, and the Bishop and his nephew were left alone.

"Well, John," said his lordship gravely; "now, can you give me any idea of the bill?"

"I cannot, sir; it will be heavy,—far heavier than I thought. Although some expenses were *nil*, the very ones I least expected—for instance, your old friend Father Corkran——"

"Aye; he went against you, I know."

"Yes, utterly. Had it been any other time, and only for the extraordinary misconduct of the landlord, and this agitation, I'd have been swamped. As it is, the Ballot accounts for a good deal. One of the priests worked very hard for me."

"One, hey?—who?"

"Father John Desmond, the curate of Ballinagad. The parish priest was dead against me—frightful man: won nearly ten pounds off me at cards, and denounced me the Sunday after. The Bishop was opposed to me, I think."

"Ah! 'Twas hardly worth his while to interfere; you see, it's not long now you'll be in,

for all the money and the trouble." And his lordship groaned discontentedly.

"No matter, sir, no matter;" and Hogan shook his head determinedly. "I go to London on Tuesday, to take my seat. I don't know when I'll be back. Let me see. I must run to and fro a good deal. I don't want to let go my practice altogether, you know."

"Ah! John, I wish you had stuck to the practice a little longer; it's the surest card—it is indeed."

"Yes, sir, I know that; however, 'nothing venture, nothing win.' I should be a thundering fool not to take the ball at the hop. There is not a doubt on my mind that I'll be re-elected. No, no, my lord! the Liberal Government is rooted as no Government ever was before in the country. Why, it is ridiculous, on the face of things, to imagine they could ever be upset. They monopolize all the talent of the century—all the learning. There are only a couple of Conservative papers in London: that is very significant, sir."

"As for talent and learning, that is thrash—mere thrash. It's votes that does it. To every *talented* voter, how many fools have you? And

as for newspapers, divel a bit I ever believed in newspapers—never. And another thing the Liberals have done, with extending the franchise here. Mark you this. Everybody has it, and so nobody values it; the better classes don't care for the trouble of voting: it is no *class privilege* now, as it was once upon a time; so the power is passing into the hands of the rabble—that is, comparatively speaking I call them rabble."

"That will be only temporary,—must be, sir. We have the example of New York before us in that matter; and, after all, as Saltasche said the other day, the utterances of this country in politics are scarcely responsible yet. You must not forget that we are young,—yes, sir, young, in political life—inexperienced." And Hogan drank off his glass of wine with the air of one who has decided everything.

The Bishop sighed gently, and shook his head with a little gesture which signified plainly that, while yielding to the persuasive tongue of his nephew, he reserved his own convictions on the subject.

The next day, in Sackville Street, Hogan met, at the corner of a street leading to one of

the chief railway stations, Miss Davoren and her brother, walking together towards the bridge. He had a spare half-hour, he found, on consulting his watch; so he accosted them, and all three walked on together.

"I ought to congratulate you, Mr. Hogan," said Nellie, looking up almost shyly at him. She felt the least bit in awe of him now. "You had a wonderful triumph."

"Yes. I am astonished at myself. I ascribe it to luck, and to my friends—and assistants," he added laughingly to Dicky.

That young gentleman had the grace to blush a little.

"There wasn't any need,—there wasn't, positively. They're all gone mad on this Home Rule."

Dicky had been talking to the aristocratic Mr. Orpen in the train that morning, and his views on Home Rule had undergone considerable modification at the hands of that mentor.

"Gone mad! Tut, tut! you mustn't speak disrespectfully of my standard, my dear fellow!"

Dicky only laughed, and turned off short

into the college gates, which they had reached. Hogan had an appointment with Saltasche in the Green; but it wanted nearly twenty minutes of the time, and he thought to himself that he could not do better than spend the interval in the company of Miss Nellie, whom he never remembered to have seen looking more beautiful.

"In what direction are you going, Miss Davoren?"

"Fitzgerald Place: to Miss O'Hegarty's."

"Ah! the lady I met at your house some time ago. Do you know, I had been thinking of running out on Monday in that direction again."

She only looked at him, and said hesitatingly, "Yes."

"Yes," he repeated. "Did we not agree I was to come and tell you all my adventures: eh?"

Nellie did not even look up this time; but her cheeks flushed a little. He watched her well.

"You wouldn't care to hear about it all, though?"

"On Monday," she replied, with a little tremor, "we shall not be at home. Dicky

and I have to go to a place beyond the Park, to pay a visit which it is impossible to put off."

"Oh me!—and Tuesday I go to London. Is it not too bad, now? Let me see;" and he stood still, as if to turn back.

Nellie looked up hastily, as she turned, to see if there were any trace of displeasure or misapprehension of her meaning in his face. In reality he was thinking that it was as well she had declined his visit; he was pressed for time. After all, though he knew he was in love with her, it was safe to be prudent. So, conscious of having the advantage, he held out his hand.

"It may not be good-bye; but, wish me well, won't you?"

He was cold-hearted by habit, if not by nature, and fenced round with caution and foresight; but there was something in the beautiful eyes which met his now that put calculation to flight, and it was with a very different feeling that he murmured, as he pressed her hand,—

"Good-bye, and God bless you: you will hear from me soon."

Then he turned abruptly, and walked away

down the street as fast as possible, heedless of everything and every one he passed, and seeing only her face and the bright transformation that came over it as he spoke to her. He almost wished he had remained a moment longer. It might be a long time ere they met again; and he fell into a gloomy train of undefined foreboding most unusual to him. What reason there was for it he could not have told; but certainly he was not in his customary equable, sanguine mood. The reaction after the excitement and over-work of the last month had, no doubt, set in; and he felt, in spite of himself, languid and depressed. The day was heavy, no sun illumined the long rows of sombre tall houses, and a light grey fog hung over the trees in the College Park. It made him think of Peatstown, and his weary drive through the hills. Mud, cold, wet, and desolation: these four words summed up his principal impressions of the place. He recalled Barney Shane's dwelling on the hillside with a shiver of disgust. What an experience, to have passed a night in such a hovel! Let them say what they would, he considered he had earned his prize.

Hardship of any kind was antipathetic to Hogan's nature. That which was soft and easy in life he clung to. He could work hard; but if he did, it was not as men do who work for the love of working and for the love of their calling. He worked hard that he might the sooner play. There was a strong tinge of the peasant nature underlying all his polish: the ingrained hatred of work, the fatalistic indifference engendered by a social and religious system of long and complicated standing, the curious reverence and love of power and authority peculiar to those who have been oppressed. All this old leaven worked under the superimposed layer of training and culture. On the maternal side he had inherited good blood, or the legend of it; whereas the Hogans had neglected to preserve their family record. He had his cleverness from his mother; and, as often happens when such is the case, his mind ran in rather a feminine mould. There were some parts of his character, at all events, which were not what the world calls manly.

He reached Saltasche's office nearly ten minutes late, and sauntered up the stairs with a sort of defiant leisureliness. He thought

he would take a slightly independent tone with his friend now. Just as he reached the door, a man running downstairs from an office on an upper story hailed him.

"Hollo! that you? Mr. Hogan, allow me to congratulate you, my dear fellow!" And the gentleman, whom indeed he hardly knew, shook his hand violently.

He was a noisy, chattering attorney of the money-lending class, who knew everybody and everybody's business, and who was a most notorious liar.

"Thank you, Stamps! Can't stay a minute," returned the member carelessly.

Stamps seemed gratified with this much notice, and darted upon the handle of the door to open it for Hogan. The member passed in, nodding his acknowledgment. Slight as the incident was, it was nevertheless a tribute to his new dignity, and sufficed to put him in good humour again. He advanced to the fire, apologising to Saltasche for his delay. There was the least shade of consequence in his tone, which his friend's fine observation did not miss. He laughed pleasantly, and pointed to a chair opposite.

"You got a stunning majority, didn't you? No fear of a petition, eh?"

"Not a whit. They couldn't do it. Anyhow, it would not be worth while wasting powder on. They'll wait until I try it again. I take my seat on Tuesday evening."

"You do? Do you know anybody in London?"

"Scarcely. I have been promised letters to people there."

The Bishop, indeed, was procuring him letters of introduction to sundry Irish Catholics in London—people whom Hogan ungraciously vowed never to go near.

"I'll see about that. Hem! Mrs. Bursford and her daughter are going over for the season. You will do well to call upon them. Mrs. Bursford has a relative in the present Government. I'll find out their address and send it to you."

Hogan murmured his thanks. He was astonished at this intelligence; and vainly tried to recall some foreshadowing of it in his conversation with Miss Diana.

"Now, of course," went on Saltasche, those prospectuses can be issued. I have

two or three here waiting your name; and you will be able to save me many trips to London about getting the slate companies floated, and this mad old fool's railway company too. He'll ruin himself at that yet. By-the-bye, there's something nice to be made on the Patagonian Loan. The stock is now at ten shillings; but on Thursday it will be stated that the United States have offered to buy Patagonia. So I am wired from Washington. You can imagine how that will start the prices. You will be in London on Wednesday. Stier and Bruen, of Cole Alley, Mincing Lane, do most of my commissions. Suppose you give them a call? I'll write in the meantime to them about you."

"Very kind of you indeed; but there's a little hindrance in the way. I have no money."

"What! ten shillings even?"

"Not a *sou!* It's very tempting, though."

"It's a sure thing. You see, all they want from you would be a deposit for cover, in case——; but in this instance, except as a form, that would not be necessary. I introduce you. You understand me."

But the barrister had, in fact, never given his attention to the Stock Exchange science. So Mr. Saltasche was obliged to explain the modern system of betting on the differences, or "selling short," as the process is called in the land of its birth.

Hogan was dazzled by the talk of his companion. That transactions involving millions could be carried on by men who were comparatively penniless, seemed an absurd impossibility. Saltasche, however, was able to give him chapter and verse for his assertions, and told him the names of many plutocrats, with the history of their successful operations.

Then they adjourned to lunch, and a bottle of champagne threw an additional tinge of rose-colour over everything. Hogan quitted his friend in a state of bodily and mental exhilaration more unusual to him still than the fit of blues under which he had laboured in the forenoon.

END OF VOL. II.